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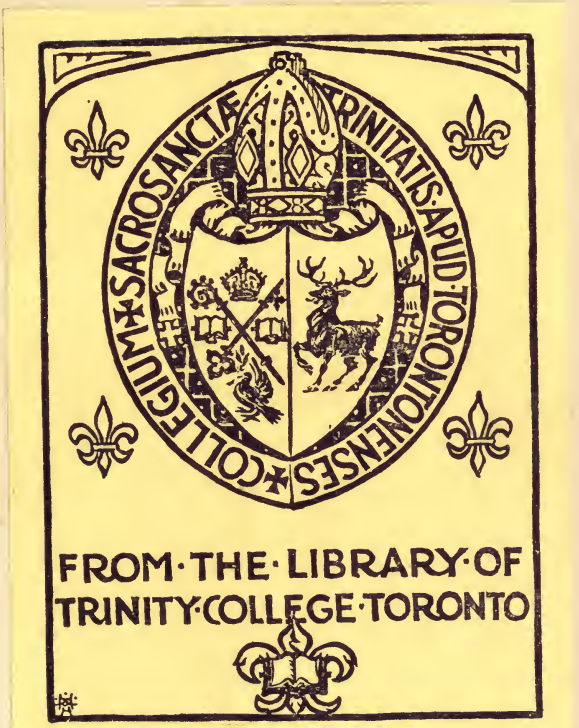


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*MY DUTY TOWARDS GOD,*
*AND MY DUTY TOWARDS MY NEIGHBOUR.*

BEING A FOURTH SERIES OF

# PARISH SERMONS,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF
S. EDWARD, CAMBRIDGE.

BY THE

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LATE FELLOW OF GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE, HULSEAN
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# PREFACE.

In publishing this Fourth Series of Parish Sermons I have to remark, that it differs from its predecessors in consisting of a continuous course; the subject being Duty towards God and our Neighbour, and the division of the subject that supplied by the two summaries of duty given in the Church Catechism. I am strongly of opinion that the teaching of a Parish Pulpit is much benefited by occasionally assuming such a form, and I have wished to support and press the opinion by publishing this practical comment upon it. At the same time it should be observed, that the Sermons in this volume by no means hang together in such a manner as to be only intelligible when read in regular succession. On the other hand almost every one of them may be

separated from the rest, and, by a slight change of phraseology here and there, treated as an independent sermon.

I have received so many assurances of the utility of my former volumes, that I do not deem it necessary to make an apology for sending forth another.

H. G.

CAMBRIDGE,
*March*, 1856.

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# SERMON I.

## DUTY TOWARDS GOD.

Exodus vi. 8.

I am the Lord.

It appears to me, that an orderly course of Sermons upon a particular subject supplies a very useful method of employing the time devoted in our Service to pulpit teaching. It would certainly not be desirable that our sermons should always hang together in courses; but it may be occasionally very useful to take a particular subject, and discuss the different heads and portions of it Sunday after Sunday in regular succession and in detail; a subject can be more completely handled when treated thus; the unity and completeness of Christian doctrine can be better exhibited; and if it be thought that a series of connected discourses may be likely to cause weariness, I should say that, with proper attention

on the part of Minister and people, this need not be so, and I believe that in matter of fact it is not so: on the other hand, I imagine that the interest is rather sustained from one Sunday to another, and is likely to grow as the development of the subject proceeds.

Hence it has appeared to me, that we might with advantage take, as we have in former instances,[1] a subject for a connected series of Sermons; and the subject which I have chosen, and which by God's blessing I intend to make the ground of my addresses to you for some weeks to come, is that which is suggested by that important question in the Catechism, "What is your duty towards God?" This subject is not only infinitely important in itself, but it will fit on well with the course of Lectures on the Church Catechism, which I preached to you some time back, and will enable me to discuss more in detail a portion of the subject, which I was then able to treat only in a general way. The question, What is our duty towards God? does indeed require no reference to the Church Catechism in order to give it weight, or to prove it worthy of being pondered and dwelt upon by ourselves; but I

[1] See the course of sermons on the Lord's Prayer in my First Series of Parish Sermons, and my Lectures on the Church Catechism.

make the reference, chiefly because the Catechism not only gives the question, but supplies a very complete and detailed answer; and the portions of that answer I propose to make the ground of successive sermons. We shall thus not only have a convenient and very useful guide, but we shall be led to see the great beauty and completeness of that summary of our most important duties, which we have been taught to *repeat* from our childhood, whether we have learned to *practise* it or not.

In this present discourse I intend to make some general remarks upon the meaning of our duty towards God—the great truth that we have such a duty—and how it comes about that we have it.

Now what is *duty?* It is something which is *due* from one to another, something which *ought* to be given or *ought* to be done; not a thing which is given or done under compulsion, under the influence of fear, extorted by force, not even a free gift or offering; quite different from this; if a thing is a duty, it must be done, because it is *right* to do it, and *wrong* to omit it. We may easily get puzzled in dealing with such very general words as *right* and *wrong*, but an example will shew very easily and clearly to the simplest amongst us what duty is. Take the case of the

duty of a parent to support his child: this is a thing that *ought* to be done, we need no reasoning to prove that it is so, every one acknowledges it, and we should consider a person crazy who denied it: the law of the land indeed may give certain powers to magistrates, in order to compel idle and worthless parents to support their children, but the law does not make the duty, nor is it from fear of punishment that parents do their duty towards their children:—no, it is because they know it to be *right* to do so; and when we speak of parental duty, we speak of that, to the existence of which the conscience of all mankind bears witness.

Many other examples might be given, but the one which I have adduced will be sufficient; I have taken it, as you will observe, from that class of duties which men owe to each other, and I have done so, because such duties are more generally understood and more readily acknowledged than those which we owe to God; every one admits that it is the duty of parents to take care of their children and of children to obey their parents; every one admits the existence of such duties as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, abstaining from lying, stealing, murder, adultery, and the like, but there is not that same universal perception of duty towards God; there may be a

very general belief, that God has put certain commands upon us, and that if we do not obey them He will punish us, but there is no sense of *duty* in this; and I have endeavoured to explain what duty means, and to illustrate its meaning by referring to a simple example, in order that you may perceive that if we speak rightly of a "duty towards God," we speak of something which is *due* to Him, something which *belongs* to Him of *right* because He *is* God,—not something which He can claim and enforce, because He is powerful and can cast into hell, but something which is His by supreme and eternal *right*, whether He enforce His right or no.

So much then for the meaning of the term *duty*, which is a very emphatic word,—one for which you could not easily substitute another having the same force,—and yet one which I will undertake to say, that many of us have used over and over again without considering how much it means; in fact, any person who does seriously and solemnly consider the meaning of this word must of necessity become a godly religious man; he can scarcely contemplate his relation to the Most High God, who has revealed Himself as Our Father who is in Heaven, without feeling himself constrained to pay that duty, which he cannot but allow to be indeed his duty towards God—

that which he owes to God—that to which Almighty God has an eternal, most sacred *right* at his hands. But now let me explain to you, why it is, that, in enforcing this great point of our duty towards God, I have chosen for a text those particular words, which I read to you before beginning this sermon. "I am the LORD"—those are the words of my text; and, taken merely by themselves, they might seem to have no particular bearing upon the subject which I have now in hand; but in reality they have a very close and immediate bearing; and for this reason, that they are as it were the sign manual, whereby Almighty God, in His dealings with His ancient people the children of Israel, claimed from them the performance of that duty, which they owed to Him. The verse, from which I have quoted the words, is, I believe, the first occasion of their occurrence, and that is why I have taken them from that particular place; but you will remember, (or if not, you will easily perceive by reference to your Bibles,) that they occur continually in the history of God's dealings with His people in the wilderness. God sends by the mouth of His servant Moses some particular command to be obeyed, some new ordinance, some new religious observance or institution; Moses recites the command which he has received, and then, in order

to mark that the command is not his but God's, that he is only a messenger, a minister, a servant, he adds the emphatic words "I am the Lord," that is, I am He who have revealed Myself to you, as your God, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the I AM,—you are to obey this commandment because it is My commandment, not Moses' commandment,—not because it is a part of your duty to Moses, but because it is a part of your duty to God. Thus the addition of the words "I am the LORD," made to any proclamation which Moses might publish to the people, stood in the place of a signature to a document in our days; it was God's signature, God's own acknowledgment of the command, it marked the command as a portion of the Israelite's duty towards his God. And though I might have found many passages in Scripture, which would in some respects have equally well given a foundation for asserting the great principle of duty towards God, yet I have chosen the words of the text as being perhaps the most emphatic in the Bible, because the most simple; there is no argument you will perceive, or rather there is no arguing; the words which gave validity to an Israelitish law merely rehearsed the fact, that He who gave the Law was Jehovah, and nothing more was added, because nothing more remained to be said; if, after know-

ing that a law was the Law of God, an Israelite would disobey it, then disobey it he must; he must of course take the consequences of his disobedience, but the bearer of the Law, Moses himself, could give no greater weight to a commandment, than that which depended upon the simple fact, that the commandment in question was given by God. Hence the words "I am the LORD" were in the ears of an Israelite the most solemn form of sanction that a command could receive; and I am persuaded, that, if we take a right view of the subject, they will appear in the same light to ourselves, and that to a right-minded man nothing can possibly add to the force of the argument contained in such words as these, "You ought to do this or that, for God desires that you should do it; He has commanded it; your duty towards God requires that it should be done."

But now let me endeavour to point out to you upon what principles this duty towards God depends. I have wished you to perceive, that the very idea of duty involves *this*, that if it is our *duty* to do anything, the ground of our duty must be, not that God can and will punish us if we omit it, but something very much deeper; if the power of vengeance were the only ground of urging us to do this and that, then it might be said that we *must* do it if we would escape punishment, or

that it would be *prudent* to do it, or *wise*, or *far-sighted*, but it could not be said that we *ought* to do it; yet in the case of those things which God commands, we *do* say that we *ought* to do them, that it is not merely our interest but our duty, that not merely *prudence* but *right* demands our obedience. On what ground shall we explain and support this?

There are several grounds which may be urged, and which I shall take in the order in which I find them in Scripture. The first of these meets us in the very earliest history of mankind. No one can have read the account of the creation of mankind, in the commencement of the book of Genesis, without being struck with the remarkable distinction, the infinite gulph, lying between that creation and all that preceded it. Birds, beasts, fishes, and the rest, were called into manifold existence by the word of God, even as the ground was clothed with the plants and trees bearing fruit under the influence of the same divine power; but the same account does not extend to man, he was of too precious a quality (if I may so speak) to be thrown broadcast upon the face of the earth; a man is created, after consultation in Heaven, in the image of God, and then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and made him a living soul. Now it is not necessary

for my present purpose to discuss the precise meaning of the term "the image of God," nor to define precisely how much is meant by the breath of life being breathed into man's nostrils by God Himself, or what change has taken place through the fall, because this point is clear and is abundantly sufficient for my present purpose, namely, that there is a relationship, an affinity, a close vital connexion between God and man, which does not exist between God and any other of His creatures; man is in a very high sense, as he is termed by S. Luke in the conclusion of his genealogy of Christ, "the *son* of God;" so that it is inconceivable that the true aims and purposes of God and man can be distinct; what is right for one must be right for the other; if the will of man be opposed to the will of God, then it is clear that man's will has been perverted, has received a twist, a wrench, a shock, and ought to be different; and if man had remained perfect as he was created, it is clear that he *would* have done God's will, even as in Paradise he did do it. And therefore, though now he may in fact not perform it, yet it is manifest that he *ought* to perform it; *that* is it, for which he was created; it is a palpable disease of his nature that he performs it not.

And thus, upon the ground of creation, the duty of man towards God finds a clear and distinct

foundation: a man makes a machine and it *ought* to do its work, he builds a ship and it *ought* to perform its voyages,—*ought*, I say, because this is according to the constitution, the original end and aim and purpose of the instruments which man has made; and so, only in a much higher sense, man being made in God's image and informed by His Spirit *ought* to do those things, and walk in those ways, which are in accordance with the holy will of Him, who made him such as he is; and I may add, that Adam proved that he ought to have obeyed God's will by this very fact, that as soon as he had broken it he hid himself for shame.

But there is another ground, upon which our duty towards God depends, and which very much concerns ourselves as Christians; and that is what I may call the ground of *election*. When men had corrupted themselves extremely, God (as you will remember) chose—elected—out of the tribes of mankind one particular person, I mean Abraham, to be the beginning of His kingdom amongst men; and when He had so called Abraham, and so revealed Himself to Him, He became "the God of Abraham" in a new and very peculiar sense; and this revelation having been continued to the children of Abraham, God adopted the peculiar title

of "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob," and when He delivered His statutes and ordinances to Israel, it was under this peculiar title that He delivered them; so that there was something more than the claim of duty involved in the words "I am the LORD,"—it was not merely the "I am," but the God of their *fathers*, who had appeared to Moses and sent him to them. You will easily perceive, that this was a very strong ground upon which to claim obedience; when Moses told the Israelites, that the God, who had brought their ancestor in old time from Mesopotamia and had blessed him and had been with his posterity, had come to visit them, which of the Israelites would not be moved by the news? which of them would not conclude, that it was his *duty* to listen to and to obey a message from this God of his fathers? And still further: God redeemed this people out of Egypt, eased their shoulders from the burden and their hands from the making of pots, changed them from a mob of slaves into a nation of freemen, and therefore when He addressed them by the mouth of Moses He had clearly another strong ground on which to claim their duty; He who spoke to them was not only the God who had created their first father Adam, not only He who had called Abraham and Isaac and

Jacob, but something closer to them than this—the God who had "redeemed them out of the land of Egypt, the house of their bondage."

This is merely a sketch of the way, in which, in His dealings with His people in ancient times, God claimed their obedience and service as a *duty*, as that which on all grounds they *ought* to pay. I pass over it thus briefly, in order that I may have time to say something of the extension of this principle, which belongs to the Christian Church; God deals with us now as with His Church in former days; it is still a Church of election; we to whom God sends His commands are still rightly described as redeemed out of the house of our bondage; but oh, Christian Brethren, if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt be nothing better than the faintest shadow and type of the redemption of mankind out of the power of the devil, how much greater and more forcible must be the appeal which is made to us, on the ground of that mighty deliverance which Jesus Christ has wrought out! This view of our condition, as of men redeemed from infinite woe by the most precious blood of Christ, does indeed throw at once the clearest and yet the most solemn light upon our duty towards God; I would ever wish to enforce the principle, that, apart from all thought of redemption, obedience to God is the only course for a race created

in God's image; it may be, that such obedience could not have gained heaven, that happiness was gone for ever by sin except through the redemption of Christ—be it so—I do not deny it—I fear it is an awful solemn truth, that the fall of man *did* put him in such a deathly state as this, but anyhow a continuance of rebellion against God could never have brought him peace, anyhow to have persisted in sin could never have made him happy; no—his duty was the same as before, whether in the garden of Eden or amongst the thorns and thistles of a world cursed for his sake, his duty towards God could be but one. This, however, I would have you to perceive, Christian Brethren, and to acknowledge with hearts full of gratitude, that your duty towards God is in fact, through the loving mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord, not a duty to be rendered as by those, who have fallen and know not whether they shall rise again, but a duty which if discharged is certain to bring its reward. When we ask a child in the Catechism, What is your duty towards God? we are speaking to one who has already been taught, that in baptism it was made "a member of Christ, a child of God, an heir of Heaven;" the question therefore really is—What is your duty towards God, you being such as you are—what is *your* duty—not, what do you consider to be duty of Turks and Infidels and

Savages—but what is your *own*, you being (as you say that you are) adopted into God's family, redeemed from a fearful curse, assured of an entrance into the kingdom of Heaven? Christian Brethren, I have wished you to see, that there are other grounds of duty besides this, that our duty depends upon the eternal laws of *right*, and that it is contrary to the original design of man's nature that he should live otherwise than as a creature owing and owning a duty towards God,—but assuredly, no such arguments come so near and so convincingly to the heart, as that which depends upon the truth of our being redeemed from sin: the words of the text may be expanded into "I am the Lord who made you," or "I am the Lord who called Abraham and Isaac and Jacob," or "I am the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;" but the words never assume, as an argument for the reality of the duty which we owe to God, the hundredth part of the force which they possess, when they are expanded thus, "I am the LORD, who came to visit you in great humility, and who died upon the cross that you might not die but live!"

## SERMON II.

### TO BELIEVE IN HIM.

S. James ii, 19.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

I spoke to you last Sunday, Christian Brethren, generally concerning our duty towards God. My chief aim was to impress upon you that we had such a duty, that our relation to Him who made us, still more who hath redeemed and who sanctifieth us, is not a matter concerning which we have a choice, concerning which one man may think one thing, and another another, but that we are all bound in the most solemn manner to a certain line of conduct towards God,—that one kind of behaviour is *right* and another *wrong*,—and that all this is true, if for no other reason at least for this, because we are men created "in the image of God," and are not mere animals,

which the earth has brought forth abundantly, and which have been bid to increase and multiply.

This great point of the existence of a duty towards God is one, which requires to be pressed upon mankind at all times, and not least in times like our own. We may in fact say, that if Adam and Eve had remembered that they had a duty towards God, we should not have been the fallen race that we are; for if they had rested their resistance to the temptation of the serpent upon this, that they *ought* to obey God, that to disobey was quite as unnatural, quite as contrary to the true spirit and end of their being, as it would have been to commit suicide, it is clear that Satan would not have been able to gain any very great hold upon them. Suppose in fact that Satan had tempted them to kill themselves,—what would they have done? what effect would the temptation have had upon their minds? every feeling within them would have been roused to resistance at once; they would have said,—we clearly were not made for *this;* it is not fit, that we should bring to an end this glorious life, with which our Maker has endowed us; it is monstrous, it is unnatural; the suggestion would in fact have appeared intolerable, Satan knew well that it would have been so; and yet what great difference was there between a natural suicide, and that moral or

spiritual suicide, which Satan suggested to them with success? he put into their minds a thought, which ought to have been quite as much opposed to their feelings as that of laying violent hands upon themselves; and the temptation would so have appeared to them, if they had fully recognised such a thing as a duty towards God. But unfortunately the argument never turned upon duty; the point was, whether God would punish them or no, whether God had any design in keeping them from the forbidden tree, besides that which He had announced to them; and so the great truth, that they had a duty whether God would punish them or no, that rebellion was unnatural and therefore could not fail to be ruinous,—this was forgotten, and the consequence was that the devil prevailed.

Thus the recognition of a duty towards God might have saved Paradise; and I have said that certainly these days in which we live are not days, in which the enforcement of the great principle of duty is less necessary than in former times. Indeed I should be disposed to say, that whatever may be the excellences of character which chiefly belong to this generation, that of a sense of duty is not to be accounted as a prominent one; there is so strong a tendency in this country, and in these days, to measure every-

thing by the mere material advantages which it will produce, that there is danger of deep sturdy principles of doing right because it is right, without reference to the apparent advantage or disadvantage of doing so,—of such principles being undervalued. Such a tendency will have its chief and most mischievous effect too in matters concerning our duty to God; the impalpable character of this duty, the ease with which the scoffer may deny it, the apparent freedom which may be enjoyed by those who trouble themselves not at all about the duty, the acknowledged difficulties belonging to the way in which God governs this world,—all tend to increase the danger of our duty to God being now as of old kept out of view, in order that we may the more easily obtain some forbidden fruit. And that the sense of this duty is practically much less felt than it ought to be, I think that hardly any of us will question; I am sure that no one will question it among those, who, as Ministers of the Gospel, have more especially been called upon to observe the religious condition of their fellows.

But I must now pass on to consider that particular point of duty towards God, which is to be the special subject of my address to you to-day. The Church Catechism tells us that the first duty which we owe to God is "TO BELIEVE

IN HIM." Upon which I shall first observe, that it would be contrary to the whole spirit and intention of these sermons to give you a laborious discussion concerning the being and attributes of God, and from a long string of arguments to draw the conclusion that there *is* a God; arguments of this kind, arguments belonging to what is called Natural Theology, may be very useful and very interesting,—doubtless they are so,—but with us they would be out of place; for, in the first place, they would take us into curious explanations for which the pulpit would be anything but convenient; in the next place, you will remember, that you, Christian Brethren, who are here present, having already to-day repeated the Apostles' Creed, and declared in the face of God and before each other that you *do* "believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," it can hardly be necessary to take up your time with arguments drawn from the works of God's fingers, to prove that He the great author and maker of all things is a living God; and in the third place, suppose that I did take you through an argument, and that I made it clear upon the principles of all recognised human philosophy that there is and must be One God, suppose that I had forced your intellects to this great truth, what ground should I have gained beyond that which is spoken of

in the text, and which we are there told that devils may hold and yet be devils still? "Thou believest that there is one God," says S. James to a man who believes this and has no religion besides; "thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." Such faith then there may be without religion; and if so, what advantage would it be to me or to you, that I should spend labour and time upon such a barren ground? No, I would rather assume that you all have at least such faith as this, and I would wish to shew you how it may be, and ought to be, not something wrung from the intellect of devils, who acknowledge the truth and tremble in the confession of it, but something yielded up to God by the willing hearts of Christians, as being meet, right, and their bounden duty.

This then will be one great point with which we shall be concerned—the contemplation of belief in God as a duty. There are many things concerning which there is no duty, either as to believing or as to disbelieving them; a thing may be true, and yet it may not be incumbent upon us to believe it, or a thing may be false, and yet it may not be our duty to disbelieve it; I do not of course mean, that it can ever be our duty to believe what is false or to disbelieve what is true, but I mean that there are many things

concerning which we are not bound to have any belief, any knowledge, any opinion. Take the case of science; scientific men can prove by the clearest of arguments a number of most astonishing truths; they can tell you, for instance, that the sun is distant from the earth a certain number of miles; they can lay down for you the motions of the planets as accurately as they can describe the motions of a clock; they can tell you how each atom of the universe is linked by fixed laws to each other atom; they can prove what they say to be true to any one, whose education enables him to understand their meaning, to speak their language; but you are not bound to believe all these marvellous results, if for no other reason at least for this, that you are not bound to trouble your head at all about the matter; if you have not the necessary education, you may say, All this is out of my line, I know nothing of science, I have other things which fully occupy me; and even if you have the education and the time, you may if you please say, These things do not interest me, my taste lies in another direction, science has no charms for my mind. All this may be said concerning human scientific knowledge, and other knowledge of a like kind; many do say so, and no blame attaches to them; to know and believe in matters of this kind involves no obligation, no duty. But

it is quite different with regard to believing in God; men not unfrequently seem disposed to treat the knowledge of Him as they would human knowledge, they would represent and wish to make it appear that divine matters do not interest them, that they have enough to do in attending to matters of this world, that whether there be a God or be not a God, and what the character of God may be, are questions with which they do not care very intimately to concern themselves: now what I wish to impress upon you is, that this is a way in which no man has any right to think or to speak; the being of God,—who He is, what He is, in what relation He stands to ourselves,—these and the like are precisely *the* questions, which every human soul is bound to ask, and to which he is bound to render a true answer if he can. You will easily see upon a moment's reflection, that the question, whether there be a God or not, is one upon the answer to which a man's whole conduct, or at all events his whole view of the world and of himself, will depend; it is possible, that a man may say "there is no God," because men have done so,—the foolish body of whom David tells us in the Psalms was one of the number,—but anyhow something must be said, and if it appear to us (as no doubt it will) to be folly and absurdity of the highest kind to deny the being of God, then

the acknowledgment of Him, the honest and hearty expression of our belief in Him, will be seen as clearly to be the duty of us all.

And here let me observe, that the manner in which we speak of believing in God involves the use of a word, which, though very small, is very emphatic. We speak of believing *in* God,—not merely believing certain truths about Him, not merely believing that there is such a Being,—but something much deeper and more important than this; to believe in God is so to believe in Him as to make the belief the ground of all we do, the measure of all we think and say. I may easily believe a fact which is told me, and yet the belief may have no influence upon my conduct, there may be facts in science which are of this kind, there may be abundance of facts in newspapers or in books of the same kind, facts which are asserted on good authority, which therefore I admit to be true and probably never think about again. And this is just the kind of belief concerning God, which we ought *not* to have; it is perhaps worse than that belief, which is spoken of in the text as pertaining to devils, for their belief at least makes them tremble, it does not remain as a *mere* belief, it raises thoughts in their minds far too serious for that; and indeed I think we may say, that the inhabitants of the world of

spirits can scarcely be capable of this mere dry intellectual belief concerning God; whether angels or devils they are too near (so to speak) to the Almighty, to believe, without either obeying and rejoicing, or else trembling; but men may easily have such a faith, if faith it is to be called; hidden from God as it were by the veil of the flesh, or rather God being hidden from them, they are able to contemplate Him as at a distance, to say, "Tush! God careth not for it! He seeth not!" and though they will not deny that there is a God, they will practically banish Him from His own universe, and take His name in vain as though He heard not, and do wicked and shameless deeds as though He either could not see or did not care. And this perhaps may be regarded as one great trial belonging to our condition here, that it is possible for us to forget that God is about our paths and spying out all our ways, and that we are liable therefore to be seduced as Adam and Eve were by the lies of the tempter, and made to believe what he tells us rather than the everlasting truths of God. Now against this kind of belief, this spurious, useless, unprofitable, ungodly kind of belief, I say that the best protest possible is made by that form of words in which we usually express our faith; we say, I believe *in* God, and so saying we declare our faith in a manner in which

Satan could not declare his; Satan may believe that there is a God, because he cannot disbelieve it, but all that repose upon the power and love of God, that confession of the duty of obeying Him, that joyful recognition of the truth that He is about our paths, that He knows our downsittings and our uprisings, all that in fact which enables us as men standing up and looking towards our Maker to say with unflinching voice and joyful heart, "I believe in God the Father Almighty"—all *that* is impossible for Satan or any of his angels; they can but tremble, when they confess the power and being of Him whom they hate and fear.

Let us take good heed therefore, Christian Brethren, lest our belief in God should have any tendency to degenerate into a mere barren empty belief concerning Him; the danger is not imaginary; there are thousands of men whose belief amounts to nothing better, and who would therefore be in a more innocent, less dangerous condition, if they knew nothing of God and so did not believe at all. But now let me say, that the best safeguard against an empty faith is to believe and confess all that God has told us, and all that He has done for us: I shall probably have another opportunity of laying more especial stress upon the effect produced by the conduct upon the faith, and of reminding you, that however clear-

headed and well-instructed a person may be, his belief will of necessity shrivel up and become unprofitable, unless it be supported by a life of active charity; I am fully persuaded that never did lips, even of our Lord Himself, speak a more important and more pregnant truth, than when He said that he who would *do His Father's will* should *know of the doctrine* which He taught; but, leaving that view of the subject for the present, I desire to impress upon you, that the God in whom we profess our faith is not one who altogether hideth Himself, dwelling for ever in that light which no man can approach and which therefore to us must be virtual darkness, but that contrariwise He has spoken many things to us and done many things for us, and has in fact in a marvellous manner revealed Himself to us. And this being so, I say that if we would wish to guard against our faith degenerating into a mere empty formal acknowledgment of His being, we ought to contemplate Him in all that fulness and clearness of revelation, with which He has been pleased to make Himself known to us; this is in fact one great feature in the relation of God to ourselves, which constitutes belief in Him a *duty*, which takes away all choice, which makes it not foolish but criminal to take anything except faith in Him as the great principle of our lives. Who then is this

God, in whom we are told that it is our duty to believe? what has He done for us? how has He revealed Himself to us? Let the Apostles' Creed give the answer; I might of course say, the Holy Scriptures, but I refer to the Creed, because it brings before us in a short form the great points of our faith; and it tells us of one who first made us, even as He made all things in heaven and earth by the Word of His mouth, and who still preserves and is the life of all those things which He has made. And if we knew nothing more than *this*, how should we venture as wise men, nay I will say as men having their senses, to treat as an indifferent matter faith in Him? if in Him we live and move and have our being, surely in Him must be the springs of all human happiness, and in His frown the origin of all human woe. Even from such a knowledge of God as this, we might contrive to set forth in a catechism a very considerable list of duties, which as men we should owe to God. But the Creed does not leave us here, this is merely the opening article, and contains only the slightest of those bands which bind us in duty and allegiance to God; the Creed goes on to speak of Him, who being God condescended to become man for our sake, it goes through the catalogue of His acts of humiliation, reminds us how being born of a woman He put on the form of a servant, bone of

our bone, flesh of our flesh, in order that our flesh might receive from Him something of His own incorruptibility. Then further this Son of God and Son of man is recorded to have suffered under human hands, to have died and been buried, to have risen again and to have ascended to the right hand of God. A marvellous revelation this, Christian Brethren; none the less marvellous because we have known it since we were little children, and have probably repeated it oftener than we have thought about it; I remind you of it now, in order to enforce my point, that He who has thus revealed Himself, concerning whom we believe such things as these, must be one concerning whom faith can be no open question; it must be a duty if ever a duty there was, and it will be proved to be a duty, if not before, yet at least when we come to the realisation of that next article of the Creed, the coming of the same Son of God and Son of man to judge both the living and the dead. And the duty of believing in this one God becomes still more apparent, when we advance to the next revelation of Him of which the Creed speaks; we declare that we believe in the Holy Ghost, that is, we declare our belief that God has not left this world to itself, that He does not sit in Heaven as a spectator of the deeds of men at a distance, but that He is here, amongst us,

nay in us, working the work of God where Satan and sin do not hinder Him, softening those hearts which do not quite resist His gracious efforts, convincing men who will allow themselves to be convinced of sin and righteousness and judgment. Surely a very present God this; surely a God concerning whom we cannot be content to hold a few dry opinions, to guess and speculate, but one, belief or unbelief in whom must decide the whole character, and aim, and principles of our lives. Remember the point which I am desiring to press upon you: I wish to shew you, that a sterling energetic faith in God can best be strengthened and promoted, by regarding Him in all the fulness of the revelation, which He has been pleased to make to us of Himself; and I say that a mere reference to the Apostles' Creed must be sufficient to prove to us, what a deep stirring principle belief in God must be; he who believes that God made him, and has also redeemed him by the precious blood of Christ, and is now sanctifying him and the whole Church of God by His Holy Spirit, will have only one doubt about his duty of believing in God, and that is, whether it be not almost wrong to speak of that as a *duty*, which is in fact the one great *privilege* which belongs to him as a man created in the image of God, redeemed from a curse by God the Son, sanctified and made

meet for the inheritance of the saints by the indwelling power of God the Holy Ghost.

One word in conclusion, by way of giving a practical turn to what has been said. Examine your faith, Christian Brethren, and see of what kind it is; devils may have faith, as S. James tells us, and may tremble just because they have it; and men may profess to believe in God and yet have a faith worth little more, perhaps if possible still less. That faith which is near akin to love, and which gives rise to lively hope, which contemplates God in all His greatness and goodness, as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and constrains a man to obedience and holiness, is the only faith which is worth having, and is the only faith which will last. And the faith which enables us thus to see God, darkly and indistinctly though it be, in this present life, will enable us in the life to come to see Him with that brighter, more perfect vision, which belongs to angels and saints.

## SERMON III.

### TO FEAR HIM.

S. Luke xii. 4, 5.

And I say unto you, My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

The duty of believing in God, concerning which I spoke to you in my last sermon, is rightly placed at the very head of the catalogue of duties which we owe to Him. It is rightly there placed, because in the nature of things it is the root and ground of all other duties; God not being visible to our mortal eyes, the very fact of His existence is matter for faith, for that faculty of the human mind which enables us to say "I believe," although we have had no evidence of sight or touch; it may be very unreasonable and absurd to say, that

there is no God, but still (as I reminded you) it is possible, because men have been found to do it; and therefore we do well to recognise that as a great primary duty, which men may leave undone, and the leaving out of which must surely cut away the ground of all other duties, and rob the man who does so of the support of those principles, upon which his moral conduct must ever depend.

Granting, however, belief in God to be a great duty, in some sense perhaps *the* great duty of man, it may be at once remarked that it cannot stand alone. Indeed, whether regarded as a duty or not, belief in the being of God, if it be true and real, cannot be without its effects; I remarked to you, in considering those words of S. James, which formed my text when speaking upon the duty of believing in God, that even in the case of devils belief was not a mere dry conclusion of the intellect, but that it had an important moral effect,—a barren effect no doubt, causing these lost spirits to tremble, but not failing to do that,—asserting its power by this most awful fact, that when unable to soften the heart and lead to hope and love, it still could not die into indifference, but must shew itself in the trembling of hatred and despair.

But we, Christian Brethren, are not lost

spirits; we are redeemed men; and therefore the chief advantage of contemplating the working of belief in God in those, who can only tremble in their belief, is, that such contemplation may well teach us these two things—First, the utter emptiness of a professed faith in God, which produces no effect whatever upon the conduct, neither trembling nor rejoicing; and Secondly, by contrast, the kind of effect which ought to be produced upon us by our faith, we being (as I have said) not lost spirits but redeemed men. To-day then, under the guidance of that formulary of the English Church, upon which I am proposing to give you a commentary, I am going to make some few remarks to you upon the duty of *fearing God*, which is represented as immediately following upon the duty of believing in Him. "My duty towards God is to believe in Him, and to *fear* Him."

Now the question, whether we ought to fear God or not, depends for its answer very much upon the question, What do we believe about Him? what is His character? what do we know of Him? If I should ask you concerning any one of your neighbours, Do you respect such a person? have you a regard for him? do you fear him? do you honour him? you might perhaps answer, I really know very little about him; if the person

in question had only recently come into the neighbourhood, and you had not in any way been brought into contact with him, you doubtless would reply, I have no means of knowing his character; and contrariwise, if you had had the opportunity of observing the man's character and conduct throughout a series of years, and had had occasion to hear a good deal about him, you would form an opinion of him good or bad, and would honour him, or avoid him, or despise him accordingly. It is precisely so with regard to Almighty God; the feelings, which we should have towards Him, depend entirely upon what we know concerning Him; the questions, do you fear God? do you love God? and the like, depend for their answers entirely upon the knowledge which we have of Him, upon the facts which we believe concerning Him.

Let me then recal to your minds a few facts concerning God, upon which we shall probably conclude that it is right and reasonable for us to base the duty of fearing Him; I do not at all wish to represent those facts, which lead us to regard God as a God to be feared, as being all the facts of the case; I know very well that there are facts of a very different complexion, which are to be considered, and which I shall have abundance of opportunity of considering hereafter; but I wish

you not to shun those facts, which give us the sterner view of God's character; if they *be* facts, they may not be explained away, they are part of the eternal revelation of the Being of that God who changeth not, and they must be measured in full weight, and if they lead us to think of God as a God to be feared, then feared He must be in all the fulness of the meaning of the word; and doubtless we shall find, that fear will in no way prevent love, but that rather love will have its completest and best development, when it is preceded by and coupled with a godly fear. Now for our facts.

When God had created the world and made it fit for the dwelling-place of a creature of high capacities, He made a man in His own image and placed him upon the earth. He gave this man a law to keep, and He told Him that it would be death to break it; the law seemed a very simple one, and it was perhaps hard to believe that He who gave it meant all that He said, when He spoke so severely of the breach of it; it seemed hardly possible, in fact, to suppose that He who had made such a beautiful work as man, and had shewn so much kindness in providing for him, furnishing a world with all that was beautiful to eye or ear or taste apparently for the delight of man, would on so small a provocation mar His own work, deface

His own image, destroy the order of His own world. All this, and a great deal more that might be said, seems very plausible; but what was the fact? the law was broken, and God kept His word, and such ruin was introduced into the family of man, as would seem to have been enough to have frightened Adam and Eve from the forbidden tree, if they had only known the millionth part of it. I am not now going to reason about this fall; I believe that much may be said to explain it, and that it could perhaps hardly have been otherwise than it was; but all such reasonings have nothing to do with our present subject; we are now concerned with a fact, and it is the first great fact disclosed to us in the moral history of God's dealings with mankind, and one of which we see the marks and the proofs all round about us continually; and the simple question is, whether He, who, having made us in His own image and pronounced us very good, has permitted the sin of our race, whether small or great, to be punished with a curse which six thousand years have not exhausted, is a Being to be feared or no?

Take another fact. The evil seed having been sown in Paradise, the garden of the Lord, rapidly spread and multiplied: and as the human race increased, so sin increased with them; Cain set an example which was in its spirit abundantly fol-

lowed; men seemed to have forgotten the end for which they were created, the image in which they were formed; there was here and there a witness for God, a pillar set up in the desert to mark the way to Heaven, and Enoch, the most notable and conspicuous of these, was translated, as though the earth had become too corrupt to hold his bones; men's lives appear in those days as if they were so long, that the men forgot that they were ever to come to an end, and the condition at which the human race at length arrived is explained in those remarkable words of Scripture, in which God is said to have repented of His work, and to have been grieved at the heart that ever He made man upon the earth. With all this you are of course perfectly familiar; but the point which concerns my present subject is simply this, to ask—What did God do with this wicked world? did He allow it to go on after its own fashion? did He say, things are very bad, but the race of men is too numerous to permit of My punishing them, unless I should undertake such a punishment as the kindness of My feeling towards men forbids? Nothing of this kind, you know very well: no—the whole race was corrupt, and the whole race was swept away by a flood, which left only eight persons as the seed for the replenishment of the earth: now I would ask you as wise men, whether our God,

who changeth not and who but yesterday (as it were) made a clean sweep of the human race in consequence of human corruption, be a God to be feared or no?

Abundance of other facts crowd upon us as we read Scripture, all tending to the same point, all proving the same doctrine. But, not to bring before you more than may be necessary, look at the string of facts pertinent to our present purpose, contained in, and almost entirely making up, the history of God's dealings with Israel: if ever there was a history, which was written for the purpose of shewing how God deals with nations, that is the history; and if ever there was a history which illustrated the great truth that God is to be feared, that same is it. And I refer to it the more readily, because those commandments, of which the summary of our duty towards God contained in the Church Catechism professes to give the essence and marrow, do not scruple to bring out this feature of the character of Almighty God into great prominence; one of those commandments, you will remember, contains the words "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God," and if any doubt could be entertained as to the right interpretation to be put upon this word '*jealous*,' it is taken away by the explanation which the commandment supplies for itself, when immediately

afterwards the punishment of sin from generation to generation is given as the ground, upon which the attribute of jealousy depends. It seems to me clear therefore, from the tone of the commandments themselves, not to mention the circumstances of mystery and horror under which they were promulgated,—the cloud, and the lightning, and the voices, and the mountain which might not be touched under pain of death—it seems clear, I say, that it was the very design of the revelation, which God gave of Himself upon those tables of stone, to insist upon the truth, that He was a God whom His people must fear. And the entire history is in accordance with this view; the death of the whole multitude who came out of Egypt, with the exception of two persons, before they reached the promised land; the various plagues and afflictions, spoken of as being brought upon them by their sin; the leprosy of Miriam, the swallowing up of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all their company; the manner in which they are spoken of frequently as "sold into the hand" of their enemies when they fell into idolatry, especially that great captivity in Babylon, with the destruction of the Temple; and then finally, the utter disruption and dispersion of the nation, following the overthrow of their sacred city with its temple and altar;—what do all these facts shew

but this, that such as God announced Himself to be, when He gave the Ten Commandments from Sinai, such He proved Himself to be in deed and in reality? if any one of the Israelites thought the term *jealous* to be too hard, inconsistent with the divine attributes, a term which could not be intended to mean all that it seems to mean, or if any one of ourselves be disposed to adopt this same notion, then I say, take the history from the time of the Exodus until now, and see whether any gentler word will fill the place better, whether the acts of Almighty God have not shewn quite as clearly as His words, that He ought to be, that He must be, feared.

I know that persons sometimes kick against that view of the character of God, which seems to have been published from Sinai, and which results from the whole history which the Old Testament contains. There is a tendency to regard such a view of the divine character as harsh, and incompatible with those other attributes of mercy and love, which we rightly hold to be inseparable from the idea of God; and there appear to be two ways of avoiding the difficulty; the first is by lowering the authority of the Old Testament, admitting that it does represent God as a jealous God, and saying boldly, that so far as it does so it gives us an unworthy view of Him; the second is

by introducing the notion, that God's ways under the Gospel are very different from His ancient ways under the Law, and that we, as knowing God in Christ, are not only not compelled to regard Him in the light in which He appeared to the Israelites, but contrariwise are bound to throw away such a view of Him, as one of the weak and beggarly elements which have been done away in Christ. Neither of these modes of considering the subject appears to me to be right and true; as for any general idea of God, in virtue of which we are bound to deny that He can rightly be called a "jealous God," I think we must look to facts, and endeavour to discover, not what we think God *must be*, but what He actually *is;* of course, so far as such a name as jealous is understood to attribute to Almighty God any of the narrow petty feelings of the human heart, we are bound to deny that any such imperfection can attach to the Most High God; but it is manifest, that all words, by which we can describe the character of God, must be words taken from those which describe human feelings, and we may very well use a term as the best we can find, without attaching to it any of the notions of human infirmity, which it commonly bears, when used of one of our fellows. I think therefore, that those are very bold and rash persons, who venture to override that revelation, which God has given of Himself in the

Old Testament, by any general truths concerning His perfections; and as for those, who would have us to believe, that God's character in the New Testament is different from what it is in the Old, not only does such a view attribute changeableness to Him who knows no change, but it is directly opposite both to the word and spirit of the New Testament, as I shall endeavour presently in a few words to shew you.

But first let me ask you for a moment to consider, what is taught us concerning God by what we see all round about us: let us remember, that the Bible is not the only source of information which we have concerning God's government, but that we are ourselves actually living under that government, and that we have only to open our eyes to the light, in order to see something of the character of that God, of whom the Bible professes to tell us. Now the Bible reveals God to us, as one who will punish sin, not an easy careless looker-on upon the world which He has created, but emphatically a "jealous" God, and one who must be feared: the question is, whether we can perceive anything in the state of things about us, in the ordinary course of human affairs, to make us think that this is a false or overstrained view. Of course, every one must answer this question by reference to his own experience; but, so far as I

am able to judge myself, I can have no hesitation in giving a reply: it seems to me, that God does punish sin now as ever, that wickedness does bring ruin, and that the offenses of the fathers are very often visited upon their children to the third and fourth generation. This test of actual experience is one, to which I would ever desire to bring any general notions, which may depend upon what we in our wisdom think that God must do, or what we think His character must be. But as the subject is a difficult one, and an extensive one too, I shall content myself with this passing hint, and shall pass on to say a few words concerning the manner in which the New Testament treats the Old Testament doctrine, that God must be feared.

And what can I desire more clear and more direct to the point, than those words which my text contains? Please to remember that they are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; He was preparing His disciples, even in the earlier part of His ministry, to which the text belongs, for the opposition with which they would meet, and was telling them, that they, who could only kill their bodies and then could harm them no further, were not to be reckoned as being very important enemies,—*they* were not to be *feared*, but there was One who *was;* now listen to our Lord's

words,—"I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him!" Can any words be more emphatic than these? the power of casting into hell, you perceive, plainly and unflinchingly brought forward, as a contrast to the weak efforts of those who could only kill the body; the fear of Him, who can cast into hell, enforced by comparison with the fear of man; and the whole addressed not to "Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites," nor to "publicans and sinners," but to those disciples whom Christ addresses as His friends; "I say unto you, My *friends*"—mark those words, Christian Brethren, because if you be friends of Christ, then you may well regard Christ as speaking to you; the notion of such awful words as those of the text being useful and permissible, only as a warning to the careless and unholy, is exploded by the very form of the Lord's address; and if Christ addressing Himself to those, whom He had chosen to be the companions of His life, and the future martyrs of His death, thought it well to speak thus of the duty of fearing God—aye, fearing Him, as a God who can kill and cast into hell,—then I wish to know, what kind of

Christian is he, who will venture to throw away this view of God's character, as altogether inconsistent with, and superseded by, the revelation made in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

These words of our Saviour, Christian Brethren, are so clear and undeniable, and moreover so entirely demand all our attention as being His own words, that I might be content to leave the subject, with a request that you would for yourselves ponder and consider the words of the text: but I cannot conclude without reminding you, that it requires very little discernment to perceive, that the same view of the character of God is to be seen very clearly in many of the Epistles, and in the Book of Revelation. I shall confine myself to the notice of one Epistle, and that shall be the Epistle to the Hebrews: and I single out this, chiefly because it contains an argument of very great importance in such subjects as this: it shews you, how that all the threats of vengeance and denunciations of punishment in the Old Testament are so far from being done away in the New, that they receive an immense increase of strength. The Apostle, in the tenth chapter, contrasts the vengeance, which must fall upon apostates from the Gospel, with that which was denounced upon apostates from the Law, only to shew how much sorer and more terrible must the Gospel ven-

geance be. And in the conclusion of the twelfth chapter he does not hesitate, in writing to the descendents of those, to whom the Law had been given in fire and blackness and darkness and tempest from Sinai, to adopt without qualification or change the old character which God had given of Himself: "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God"—so said Moses to Israel in the wilderness, as recorded in Deut. iv. 24; "Our God is a consuming fire"—so said the Apostle of Christ, in Heb. xii. 29. Where is the discrepancy between the Law and the Gospel? between the Old Testament and the New? between Moses and Paul? In both the one and the other we may very well lay down as the best practical rule of life those words, which immediately precede the verse just quoted, and which I would beseech every Christian to consider with prayer: "Let us have grace," says the Apostle, "whereby we may serve God acceptably, with *reverence and godly fear*."

# SERMON IV.

## TO LOVE HIM.

I John iv. 18, 19.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

We love Him, because He first loved us.

In the former of these two verses S. John expresses very clearly and plainly that opposition between the feelings of love and fear, which every one must know to exist. If I were to take the expression in the Church Catechism, "to fear Him and to love Him," and assume that there was no appearance of opposition between the two duties, no one would believe that I was dealing honestly with the subject; because, if these words mean anything, they mean something like that which they would signify if applied to our fellowmen; and if I speak of a man as one whom I love, I almost exclude the notion of fear by the very

force of the words, and in like manner, if you fear a person you can scarcely indulge very warm feelings of love towards him. Hence I say that there certainly is a difficulty with regard to the two duties, which we are said to owe to God, of fearing Him and at the same time loving Him. The difficulty may be got over by so far explaining away one of the duties, as to make it quite insignificant as compared with the other; thus to fear God may be interpreted in so very slight a manner as to mean little or nothing, and we may imagine that the duty is all swallowed up in the great Gospel duty of love; and if either duty be put in the back ground in order to make way for the other, I suppose that undoubtedly fear should be made to yield to love, not love to fear; for to qualify in any degree whatever the duty of loving God would be repugnant to the feelings of every one, who had the smallest sense of his position as a redeemed creature, and a child of God. But even to qualify the force of the expression "to fear God" is a course, which no one, who holds to the teaching of the Church Catechism, can possibly adopt; for the two duties stand side by side, and one is as prominent as the other; nor do I understand how any one reading and studying the Scripture, or even marking the ways of God in the world in which we live, could take such

a course; certainly *I* could not take it, having devoted (as you will remember) my sermon last Sunday to the express purpose of bringing out into full force the duty of fearing God; a duty, which I backed with a variety of arguments, chiefly depending upon our observation of the facts which we know concerning God and His doings and His ways of governing, but which I supported especially by reference to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who, in warning His disciples and friends *not* to fear those who could only kill the body, warned them that they *should* fear Him, who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell.

Hence therefore, in speaking to you concerning the duty of loving God, I must not do so at the expense of that other duty of fearing Him, which is a coordinate and equal duty; nor is there any need that one of these should yield to the other; on the contrary, the more one is brought out the more prominent will the other appear; and he who neglects the one duty, under the notion of strengthening the other, will assuredly find, that he has unintentionally yet certainly weakened both. And there is one very simple view which may be taken of the matter, and which will, if I mistake not, make the whole subject plain; but before I discuss this, I wish by way of introduction to call your

attention to a point connected with our Lord's words concerning fearing God, upon which I spoke to you last Sunday. Those words were taken from S. Luke xii. 4, 5, and in them our Lord laid down, with a degree of emphasis to be found in few discourses besides His own, the great duty of fear, clenching His argument derived from the power of God to cast into hell by the weight of His own word,—"yea, *I say unto you*, Fear Him." Now what I wish you to notice is the context of these words; the connexion of the verses with those that follow appears to be the actual connexion in which they were spoken; S. Matthew, as you will find, gives the discourse of our Lord precisely according to the same arrangement. Well then, after the words, "yea I say unto you, Fear Him," our Lord goes on to speak thus, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." The point which I wish you to notice is this, that our Lord goes at once from the most solemn admonition to fear God, based upon the most unspeakably terrible of all grounds, to the most loving assurance of God's watchful Providence over His creatures; the sparrows are cared for by God,

how much more then they who are made in His own image; the sparrows not forgotten before Him, who after He has killed has power to cast into hell—what a remarkable connexion of two different views of the great God! the very hairs of our heads too numbered by Him,—what a view of His watchful care is given us by this assurance! and if men are under such protection, have such a Father, such a Guardian, whom or what should they fear? "Fear not therefore," says Christ; it was the true conclusion, not true merely because Christ gave it, but obviously, undeniably, the only conclusion which could be drawn; God's love has cast out fear; He who watches over us, in the manner which Christ describes, would seem to forbid any other feeling than that of love, in return for love shewn towards ourselves,—according to those words of S. John, "we love Him because He first loved us." And yet our blessed Lord by no means retracts or qualifies those solemn words, which He had spoken just before; and in fact there is no reason why He should, there is no contrariety in the two parts of His address; but what I wish you to observe is this, that our Lord felt there was no contrariety,—that He deemed no explanation necessary,—so that it was almost in the same breath, that He spoke of God casting into hell, and of God

counting the very hairs of our heads. Some persons have endeavoured to explain away the notion of casting into hell; they have thought it repugnant to the loving character of God; they have in fact denied that He is a jealous God and an avenging God, because they have thought that if He were they could not love Him; I shall not discuss this point just now, but I earnestly ask of you to observe, that no such difficulty occurred to the mind of Christ; He who came from the bosom of the Father, and had been with Him before all worlds, and came for the express purpose of revealing God and His character to mankind, was able as readily to speak of vengeance as of love; the transition from the one to the other seemed to Him no effort; and in one sentence having said with terrible emphasis, "My friends, fear Him who can cast into hell," He was able to say in the next, "Fear not, your hairs are numbered by your Father who is in Heaven."

Now let me put before you that view, which seems to me to be the simplest, and to take away all difficulty from this subject. The only fear, which we can have of any person or of any thing, not absolutely evil, and which can be calculated to produce pain or torment, is when we do not know the laws according to which that person or thing works. Thus we fear in the worst sense

of the word a contagious disease, or a wild beast, or a false friend; the murderer fears the gallows; and a thief fears the law; but putting cases of this kind out of the question, as we evidently may, because the fear of God cannot be of this character, a thing is feared or not according as we are ignorant of its mode of action or not. For instance, a person altogether unacquainted with the operations of a machine, a steam-engine, or the like, would fear to meddle with it, because it might do him injury in some way which he would have no reason to expect; an engineer by profession would have no such fear as this; what is the difference between the two? clearly this, that one understands the action of the machine with which he has to do, and the other does not; the machine must be spoken of as dangerous or not dangerous, according to the training of the person concerned. So, in like manner, an honest man is in no fear of a judge, provided only that he knows the judge to be himself an honest man and a competent; if by any misfortune an innocent man were placed upon his trial, and he was well assured of the integrity and intelligence of his judge, he could not dread the result; but suppose that the judge, either from ignorance, or ill-temper, or party-spirit, or any other cause, were well known as a capricious man,

one whose judgments could never be anticipated, because he would not be guided by the high rules of honour and the laws of evidence—who would not fear to stand before such a judge? the good and the bad must tremble alike; there could be no confidence, no one would be able to guess whether a man would be punished for an alleged crime or no. Now here is the case of a man who must be feared, not because he is inflexibly just, but because he is capricious, because he is one of those persons whose actions you cannot reckon upon, cannot calculate beforehand; of course as a judge he ought to be feared, but not feared in this way, not feared lest he should inflict upon you a punishment which you feel yourself in no way to have deserved. The same thing comes out in the distinction between the character of a king and what we call a tyrant; let a ruler be as stern as he pleases in enforcing laws, yet if those laws be just, and the penalties of them known, no one need fear for his safety; but if the ruler be a tyrant, and if instead of acting according to law he act according to his own fancy, and treat his subjects in an arbitrary manner, then indeed he may well be feared, (as all tyrants are,) with that fear which has torment, which breeds hatred, and which can never be united with love.

In fact, Christian Brethren, what we have to

fear in all cases is, not law, but the absence of law; I do not fear a soldier merely because he is fully armed, but I fear a madman who has a knife in his hand, because I cannot tell how he may use it; caprice or want of principle are the characters of mind, which make men dangerous. Now does not this explain to us very well the manner, in which God may be spoken of as a God to be feared, and yet it may be said that fear hath torment and that love casts it out? If God is a God who can cast into hell, and not only can cast into hell but will do so, if the conclusion to be drawn from the whole history of His dealings with mankind is this, that He will punish sin, if in fact the character of a jealous avenging God is not only one given to Him in the fourth commandment but one written upon every page of history, who will doubt that He is a God to be feared? and yet not to be feared as an unjust judge, or a capricious judge, or an unkind judge; no—such fear as this is altogether to be cast out and abolished; and that upon two principal grounds, which I will endeavour to put before you.

In the first place, God has ever declared to us, that He must and will punish sin; He has not deceived us, has not taken us by surprise; we are not in the condition of men charged with some offense, which they did not know to be an offense, or which they fancied would not

be punished; it has been the burden of God's message from the time of Adam till now, that sin will be punished, must be punished, that the wages of sin is death, ever has been, ever will be. And we have no reason to fear any caprice in the manner, in which God will execute His law; He knows the heart, judges the thoughts, tries the most secret springs of will and action, and He judges accordingly; men may be deceived, but God cannot be deceived; men may act unwisely, but God cannot act unwisely; men may be swayed by this low motive or by that, but God never; and therefore all fear arising from having to do with one, upon whose actions we cannot depend, is in our case taken away; if we be innocent, we shall be declared innocent; if we be condemned, we shall ourselves own the sentence just.

But then, secondly, there is something far beyond this to be said. God has ever revealed Himself as one, who does not desire the death of a sinner; it is not in the Gospel only that He is so revealed; the first sin which polluted this world brought also the assurance of God's mercy, the saving seed of the woman was revealed in promise as soon as the woman had sinned; and every one must have perceived, how that Scripture history, though a tale of sin and judgment, is still more a tale of mercy and deliverance; this is its general cha-

racter, and it is in harmony with such declarations as that in which God says, "As I live, I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live;" and if this character comes out more clearly in the New Testament than in the Old, it is not because we have in it the repeal of any old laws and a change in the principle of God's conduct, but because we have in it the fulfilment, the completion, of the Old Testament history, the end of the tale, the full discovery of the plot. Now, looking upon the New Testament thus, what lesson do we learn? why—that all the dealings of God with mankind from the beginning looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ into the world as their end and explanation; the redemption of the world through Christ is the great pivot of the history, that upon which it all turns; and so regarding it, we cannot but conclude, that the great end of God's dealings from the beginning has been not to curse the world but to bless it, not to condemn it but to save it, not to shew forth His wrath but to exhibit His infinite love; and if therefore the love of God towards us has been the great fact which the history of the world has exhibited, love from ourselves towards God becomes the great duty which we as redeemed creatures owe. Here we come upon the ground, which S. John mentions with such simple power in the text—

"we love Him," says S. John, "because He first loved us." S. John has been just writing a beautiful homily upon love; twice over he declares that "God is love;" he represents this as the very essence of the being of the Most High; and if you ask, in what outward actions does this love come forth? the answer is at hand, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." So that, regarding the Scripture history as a tale of man's fall and man's redemption, the great feature of it is the infinite love of God towards us; infinite in every way, infinite in its working, infinite in its result; I do not stop to speculate upon the manner in which it came about, that there was such an awful opportunity for the exercise of love,—I mean that I have nothing to do with the reasons why the fall of man was permitted; that is a fact, which you cannot get rid of do what you will; if you say that man has not fallen, you say that God did not make man very good;—taking therefore the entrance of sin into the world as a fact not to speculate about but to acknowledge, we have in Scripture the history of God working continually for the salvation of those who had rebelled against Him; at a cost too, which we speak of in words but cannot understand or measure, even the cost of the humiliation of the eternal

Son. Now, if the great truth which we know concerning God be this, that He gave His only begotten Son for the healing of the wounds which sin had inflicted upon our nature, what course is left to us, but to return love for love? we are worse than brutes if we make any other return; we are not called upon to love one, concerning whom we know many hard things, and whom we feel inclined to hate if we dare, nor are we to give way to a notion which has I think sometimes been held, that God's wrath was appeased by the substitution of Jesus Christ in our place, as though the desire of the Father were to punish and that of the Son to stay the Father's hand; the true view of God is that of the blessed Trinity of Persons all working together for our salvation, God in the Trinity of His nature loving us, God the Trinity being He, of whom S. John asserts emphatically, that *He is love.*

And if across such a view of God's love there seem sometimes to flit dark clouds of His wrath, if as we read S. John's homily of love we think of the declaration that God is a jealous God visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, I would remind you that it is precisely because God *is* a God of vengeance, that His love has become so conspicuous in its manifestation. If God were the careless being, that some irreverently represent

Him to be, one who can look upon evil and good with the same indifference, one of whom a mocker might truly say, "Tush, God careth not for it," then where would have been the opportunity for His display of love? how could we have either feared or loved such a God as this? the heathen idols are the true representations of such a deity. But if, for reasons past our finding out, it be written as an eternal unchangeable law, that "the wages of sin is death," and if when man sinned God assumed his nature that he might not die but live, then there is indeed a field for the display of love, such as may well call forth a corresponding love in the hearts of those, who were dead and are alive again, who were lost and are found.

Hence, Christian Brethren, I would say, that we as Christians must study the love of God, so as we see it written in the life of Jesus Christ. *There* is the true proof, that God has loved, and has therefore visited and redeemed, His people; the life of Christ teaches many other things no doubt, in fact it teaches far more clearly than any judgment ever executed by God's wrath, that God is a jealous God and that sin must be punished; it teaches us too the wisdom and power of God, so as no works of creation or of providence can teach us the same; indeed, what is there that we know of God, which is not declared in the clearest and

most emphatic manner by Him, in whose face the glory of God shines. But, if there be one element of the divine character more clearly declared than any other, it is that love of God, which sent His Son to seek and to save the lost; and therefore, he who would learn to love God will learn the lesson best by studying the life and character of Christ, and he who is much with Christ (so to speak) will learn how God loved the world, and how the world in return ought to love Him. And this point I bring before you, because he, who in the text and the verses preceding it has given us the chief lesson, which Scripture contains, concerning the love of God, was "that disciple whom Jesus loved:" when and where did S. John gain his knowledge of this love? doubtless the Holy Spirit was with him and in him, and took of the things of Christ and shewed them to him; but we cannot hesitate in referring the peculiar character, impressed upon S. John and upon his writings, chiefly to those earlier years when he was the companion of Christ; he learned the lesson from Christ Himself, and that is why he learned it so well; he knew that Jesus loved him with a peculiar warmth of affection, and thus, glorying in the title of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he was competent to declare with more unction than any other the great truth, that "God is love."

# SERMON V.

## HEART, MIND, SOUL, AND STRENGTH.

1 Kings xviii. 21.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

The Church Catechism, in putting into the mouth of a young Christian a list of his duties towards God, teaches him to say, "My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him, with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength." In the three preceding sermons I have treated of the three duties, belief, fear, and love, and in the present I wish to say something to you concerning the manner, in which, according to the words just now quoted, God is to be believed in, to be feared, and to be loved; according to the Catechism these duties are to be performed by a

Christian with all his heart, with all his mind, with all his soul, and with all his strength. This aggregation of expressions is so remarkable and so forcible, that it will be abundantly sufficient to supply us with material for thought at this time.

In the first place I will remark, that I should consider it to be waste of time, were I to attempt to distinguish very accurately between the different expressions, which are used in order to make apparent the earnestness and intensity, with which our duty towards God is to be performed. A duty which is to be performed with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength, is doubtless one which may not be performed coldly, or sluggishly, or as by constraint, or from a mere cowardly fear of punishment, or from a mere selfish notion of the line of conduct prescribed being safest and most to our profit. This is clear to the plainest and simplest person, and this is the chief thing which it was intended to make clear; and any one who has gained this knowledge will have learned as valuable a lesson, as it is possible for him to learn; and the emphasis which belongs to the addition of one word after another—heart, mind, soul, strength—will produce its right effect, without the necessity of analysing and discussing the four

different words. Nevertheless, it will not be amiss to remark, that the words may be intended to remind us, that we are made up of many powers and feelings and faculties, and that our duty towards God applies to them all, and that *he* has not done his duty towards God, who has acknowledged the claim which God has upon one part of him, and has forgotten that his whole being belongs to God. And more particularly, we may suppose the 'heart' and 'soul' to refer chiefly to the affections; the 'mind' to refer to the intellectual powers; the 'strength' to the practical life. I do not know that this is precisely the way in which the words were intended to be taken, but it may be useful so to regard them, because the words will then remind us that there is danger, lest our affections should be set upon unworthy objects and upon things changeable and temporal, lest our intellectual powers should be prostituted to unworthy purposes and should be the means of depressing and misleading instead of elevating and guiding our moral nature, and lest our strength, which has been given us to glorify God withal, should be wasted in mere frivolity or sensuality or selfishness, and so should become to us a curse instead of a blessing.

But, as I have said, I do not care to distinguish too carefully between the different expressions in

question, because the great point intended by them is manifest, and also is manifestly true—namely, that if there be any duty towards God, it matters not what, then that duty ought to be performed with all our might. If it be our duty to believe in Him, then we must believe in Him so as we believe in no other person and no other thing beside, it must be belief of a different kind, a higher order; if belief in God be merely one belief out of many, one opinion out of a bundle of opinions, one conclusion out of a hundred which we have formed, then it is not worth having; the infinite nature of all the attributes of God is the reason and ground of this. So again, if it be our duty to fear Him at all, it must be an infinite and constant fear with which we fear Him, one which runs into all our thoughts and influences all our deeds, a fear in fact such as a person would be likely to entertain, if he believed in God as in one who knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, who is about our paths and spies out all our ways. And so once more, if it be our duty to love Him, it must be with a love such as that with which God first loved us; that as His love was unbounded towards us, so ours in like manner may know no limit towards Him. In like manner of all other duties; they are duties towards *God*, and *therefore* they are infinite duties, nothing can stand

before them in point of importance, no circumstances can be imagined under which they cease to be duties; you may deny the existence of the duties if you please,—that is another question altogether and requires separate consideration,—but supposing them to be duties at all, then I say they cannot be small duties, or secondary duties, or unimportant duties; if they are to be performed in any way, they manifestly deserve and demand to be performed with heart and mind and soul and strength.

In pressing this point upon you I might have taken as a text for my discourse, a passage of Scripture containing the very words used in the Church Catechism. You will remember, that when a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Christ, saying,[1] "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and when Christ referred him to the Law as containing an account of his duties, the lawyer quoted it thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind,"—the same four expressions, you will observe, as those used in the Catechism. And nearly the same form of expression may be found in S. Matthew's Gospel,[2] and in the Book of Deuteronomy[3] too. But instead of choosing any one of these places

[1] S. Luke x. 25—27. [2] S. Matt. xxii. 35. [3] Deut. vi. 5.

of Holy Scripture for a text, I have preferred to make my remarks depend upon that appeal concerning our duty towards God, which Elijah made to the Israelitish people upon Mount Carmel, because the ground, which he there took, is the ground upon which duty towards God ought ever to stand; and the circumstances, under which he was bold enough to give the Israelites a lecture upon their duty towards God, are such as to impress his words very forcibly upon our minds even now when we read the history after so many years. Notice these circumstances for one moment. The Israelites, under the leading of Ahab and Jezebel, had fallen away into the worship of Baal; not I suppose because they regarded it to be their duty, but because they knew it to be their will, and pleasure, and fancy; they had forgotten the old lesson of loving and serving the Lord Jehovah; they were in rebellion against Him, not so much because they thought Baal a better master, as because they had forgotten that they had a Master; and it is interesting to observe, how the messenger of God addressed himself to people in such a condition. He says to them, as they stood collected before him upon Mount Carmel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." You will observe, that if Baal were really God, Elijah

would not blame the people for serving him too much; he would probably think rather, that they served him too little; but the great question was this, Was Baal God or no? if he were, then they could not by possibility serve him too much or too zealously; if he were not, then any amount of service would be treason to Him, who was indeed God. The point to be remarked is this, that even in the debilitated state to which the minds of the Israelitish people were unquestionably reduced by a course of idolatry and sin, still Elijah did not fear to refer to the first great principle of duty towards God; a doubt had been thrown by idolatry upon the question, Who is God? but none had been thrown upon the principle of entire and undivided allegiance being due to God, if only it could be certainly known who was God. And when "the people answered not a word," they gave assent to the principle; and they admitted that if the God, on whose behalf Elijah appeared, were truly God, then to serve Him with heart and mind and soul and strength would be a duty, the obligation of which they could not deny.

In speaking then to persons in our own days concerning their duty towards God, I think that we need not fear to make the same kind of appeal as that which Elijah made to the Israelites. We can have no desire to lay a bondage upon men's

necks and call it a duty towards God, if there be no such thing as a real duty towards God; but supposing that there is a God, who created us, and still more who redeemed us, then we may safely appeal to the reason and conscience of mankind, as to whether such a God ought not to be served and loved with all the heart and mind and soul and strength. I do not say that such an appeal as this will be successful in gaining men's allegiance, because there is a wide difference between confessing a thing to be reasonable and actually doing that which we so confess; but at least it is one step in the right direction, if men can be persuaded to acknowledge a duty, and to perceive, that the obligation to perform that duty depends upon the simplest principles of reason and right; it is something if men can be made to perceive, that religion is not a work into which they are to be driven under pain of punishment, but that the man who does his duty towards God is the only man, whose conduct upon any reasonable view of human life can be justified. And now, in order to shew how entirely the appeal on the ground of reason can be supported, let me in a few words remind you of the chief grounds upon which our duty towards God may be claimed as emphatically *the* duty of man, that which if performed at all must be performed with all the powers of body,

soul, and mind; and then afterwards I will ask you all to consider, whether you have performed the duty in this way.

Now there are three grounds upon which I should chiefly depend, in asserting that duty towards God must be performed with all our powers. And the first is this, that God being *one*, (and this you will remember is the very characteristic of His being,) any duty towards Him stands upon a totally different ground from all other duties. Suppose that we worshipped a plurality of gods, as the Heathen nations do and ever have done; then you have at once a divided duty, one man chooses this god as his patron and makes his vows and prayers to him, and another man chooses another god, and so on, according to the fancy or caprice of the worshippers. In the midst of a multitude of gods, as here supposed, a person would be situated almost as he is amongst his fellow-men; he owes a duty to this man, and a duty to that; there is every kind and degree of human duty, there is that of son to father and father to son, of husband to wife and wife to husband, of servant to master and master to servant; and besides all such definite duties, there is the general universal duty of love and benevolence, which binds each member of the human family to all the rest; but there is no one person amongst

men, of whom we can assert that we owe to him a duty or allegiance paramount to all other considerations; all human ties have their limits and qualifications, and there is hardly any one human duty, which may not under certain conceivable circumstances be put aside. Therefore the command could scarcely be given, to love thy neighbour with all thy heart and all thy mind and all thy soul and all thy strength; there would be an apparent exaggeration of the duty, which would strike every one as incongruous; to love thy neighbour as thyself is a much better test of brotherly love, it is a kind of self-adjusting balance which no one can have much difficulty in using. But there is no such incongruity, when a number of phrases are heaped one on another, for the purpose of bringing out in strong colours the nature of duty towards God; we feel that this is a point which cannot be overcharged; it is not one duty out of many, as though there were many gods, even as our brethren are many, to all of whom we owe some kind of duty,—no—God is but *one*, and because He is *one*, duty to Him is different from all other duties; and in reminding the Israelites of their duty towards God, Moses took in reality the deepest and most philosophical ground when he used these words, "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is *one* LORD: and thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

But again; when we consider that God created us in His own image, that we *are*, because He commanded us to be, that every breath we draw is drawn by His power and permission, that we are dependent upon Him in a manner of which we have no example in the relations of this world,—we shall perceive not only that we owe a duty to God, but that this duty is different from all others, transcends them in importance, is not merely greater than others, but is such that no other duty can be at all compared with it. We often talk of the relation of creature to creator, but in reality we talk of that of which we can understand very little, and that for this good reason, that we have nothing like it in this world; we have no example of one being depending absolutely upon the will of another, one being called into existence by the word of another, for all things in this world stand in that respect upon the same footing, as being all the creatures of the One God. Nevertheless we may form some notion of what the relation is, partly from reason and experience, and partly from reading the history of our creation in the book of Genesis; and if we do acquire anything like a clear notion of the relation, in which we stand to God as our Creator, it will happen to us as it did

to Adam and Eve, who needed no explanation of the ground upon which obedience was demanded from them,—they were *creatures*, that was enough; He who created them had a right to say, This you shall do, This you shall not do; He had a right to demand an entire and undivided allegiance; and though Adam and Eve broke through their duty towards God, yet they never seem to have questioned, that they were punished justly in consequence.

Once more. With us as Christians, who know the new relation in which the human family stands to its Creator through the redemption wrought for us by Jesus Christ, the argument for entire homage and obedience, which depends upon the fact of our being a redeemed people, is perhaps the strongest that can be brought. I spoke of Moses resting his claims for love towards God upon the most philosophical grounds, when he told the Israelites that their God was *one* God, and that *therefore* they should love Him with all their hearts; but you will remember, that Moses was never content with this ground only; he knew that such general grounds, though clear, were very cold, and he always pressed upon them the fact, that the God, whom they were called upon to love and serve with all their hearts, was He who had delivered them from the land of Egypt,

the house of bondage. And what was there that a right-minded Israelite would not have done, who was thoroughly penetrated with the edge of this argument? no God afar off, hiding Himself in clouds and darkness, would Jehovah appear to him to be—no—He would be God the Deliverer, God who had made the nation free and swept Pharaoh's hosts into the depths, tne God of their fathers who had seen their misery and had come down to help them. And so it is with regard to ourselves; anything which brings before our minds the personal relation in which God stands to us, which reveals to us what He has done on our behalf, which proves to us by clear practical demonstration, how much He loves us and cares for us,—anything of this kind will do more than all the reasoning in the world to make men believe, that they ought to love and serve God with a devotion belonging to no other duty. For here comes in the strong feeling of *gratitude*—and he who can be touched by anything can be touched by this; he who knows that God so loved Him, that He sent His Son into the world that men might live and not die, and who does not acknowledge that on this ground alone he is bound to consider himself as not his own but bought with a price, and under obligation to yield up all his powers to Him who redeemed him, cannot very

easily be persuaded by any other argument, that he is bound to fear and love God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength.

So much then for the grounds, upon which this wide all-embracing character of duty towards God depends. The grounds will not be new to you—how should they? I have only wished to remind you of them, and to make you reflect upon the point, that such grounds do not merely support *a* duty, but a duty of a peculiar kind, that the phrase "heart and mind and soul and strength" does not contain expressions, which may perhaps be used properly here and might be used properly elsewhere, but that contrariwise the intense force which is thus given to duty towards God is exactly that which *does* belong to *it*, and does *not* belong to anything else. I do not disparage other duties, but I assert that they are duties of a different kind; and indeed, so far from disparaging them, you may take this as certain, that the only way to discharge aright the smaller human duties is first to perceive the paramount character of the one great divine duty. He who performs this duty in anything like the way in which it should be performed, will find all other duties easy; he who can perform the greater, will have little difficulty comparatively speaking in performing the less. Now therefore, in conclusion, let me ask you

all, Christian Brethren, to consider with yourselves, in what manner, and to what extent, you *are* performing this duty: completely I know you cannot perform it, but are you performing it with anything at all like completeness, or with any attempt at completeness? "My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him, with all my heart, and with all my mind, and with all my soul, and with all my strength"—say these words over again this evening before you go to rest, as you used to say them when you were children, only with more of thought concerning their meaning, and then compare your duty such as you confess it with your practice such as you find it; compare the zeal with which you do your duty towards God with the zeal with which you pursue other things, and see upon which side there is the more expended; compare your earnestness in business, your keenness in pursuit of worldly advantage, your eagerness to obtain anything upon which you may have set your hearts, with the earnestness and keenness and eagerness with which you do your duty towards God. Make this examination; it is only a fair one, only such as a wise man ought to make; I do not say upon which side the conclusion will be; I have no right to judge any of you; I only wish you honestly to judge yourselves, and if any of you should find

that the faith and fear and love of God, instead of possessing all your heart and mind and soul and strength, have only the merest fragments of these, while the world possesses the rest, then I would charge you as wise men, and still more as Christians, to consider your ways, and see how they will stand in the judgment.

# SERMON VI.

## TO WORSHIP HIM.

REVELATION xxii. 8, 9.

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

THIS is one of the most striking lessons concerning the worship of God, which Holy Scripture contains. It so thoroughly belongs to the nature of the human mind, to do honour to that which is much higher and better than itself, that nothing is more easy to imagine than the existence of creatures so high and so holy, that it should be lawful and right to bend the knee before them. Every one knows what mischief this tendency has produced in the Church; that which is commonly described as the worship of Saints, has probably

been as fruitful a source of corruption among Christians as any which have existed; it is a fearful source of corruption throughout several branches of Christendom in the present day. I know that there are many arguments used to explain and defend it, and chiefly that a distinction is taken between that kind of adoration which is paid to saints and angels, and the worship which is held to be due to the supreme God alone;[1] but putting aside any discussion as to the lawfulness of paying to creatures even this inferior kind of adoration, which (it is contended) is all to which they are entitled, we may say that to take a practical view of the question (and that after all is the important one) simple uneducated persons cannot and do not draw this distinction. Practically, with the mass of people, the trust in the hour of danger will be in the patron saint and not in God; and practically, throughout large extents of country, the religion of Jesus Christ has become, in virtue of this unhappy compliance with the dictates of human weakness, the religion of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Now it is certainly a striking fact, that we should find on the last page of the New Testament a warning against falling down before any crea-

[1] See the Catechism of the Council of Trent. Part III. Chap. II. Quest. 8.

ture, and a command to worship God alone; it is that same page, which seems to assert in general the completeness of God's revelation to mankind and the danger of adding to it, containing as it does those words which are applicable in the first instance to the Book of Revelation, but which seem to be placed where they are by way of seal to the whole dispensation, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." It would seem as though it were impossible to close the canon of Scripture, without including one emphatic warning concerning that evil, which in those days would have seemed incredible, but which in after times proved itself to be the most malignant disease by which the Church was afflicted, namely, the depreciation of the worship of God by confounding it with the adoration of creatures. And there are several points in the attempt at angel-worship, which the text contains, especially deserving of our notice. In the first place, the worshipper was no ignorant or half-instructed Christian, but it was the great Apostle S. John himself; he seems to give peculiar emphasis to this fact, by saying in the beginning of the verse, "It was I John, who saw and heard these things;" he seems desirous of giving full force to the rebuke, which he received from the angel, by

calling to mind who he was, who was rebuked. And the process, by which S. John was led to think that he might lawfully prostrate himself before the angel, is very natural, and probably nearly that which has in fact led to the justifying of such prostrations; he was overwhelmed by the vision which he had seen, and he looked for the moment with too much admiration upon him, who had been the human instrument of revealing the vision; it was but a passing thought, I should imagine, in the mind of S. John, but it represents that which unfortunately has been with less wise eachers a very permanent view of the question; yet the fact, that intercourse, though only in vision, with one who had been a servant of God upon earth and was now exalted to the near presence of God's Majesty, did cause the thought to flash through the mind of S. John—here is one before whom I may lawfully bow the knee,—is sufficient to teach us, that the error is one into which holy men may fall, and that we must not therefore give countenance to the error, because the names of many good and holy men may possibly be quoted on its side. No—this is just one of those errors which does Satan's work best, because that same instinct, which leads a devout mind to worship God, may under circumstances of warm enthusiastic feeling be perverted, without much

difficulty in some cases, to make a man bow down before his fellow-creature; and an error, which can be introduced under the cover of warm devotional feeling, and under the patronage of some undeniably holy men, is of all others the error for Satan's purposes, because it will be likely to have the widest spread, to be the most seductive, and to be capable of the most specious defence. It would be well if the Church in all countries and in all ages had remembered, that once after a vision of divine things, such as was never accorded to any other, an Apostle, and he one of the great pillars of the Apostolic body, was tempted in a fit of enthusiastic feeling to prostrate himself before a departed saint, and that that saint withheld him from his purpose, and bid him to '*worship God.*'

That portion of the Church Catechism, which treats of our duty towards God, commences by enforcing the three great points, of believing in Him, fearing Him, and loving Him, with all our heart and mind and soul and strength; and having thus laid a foundation upon a soil deeper than that of any outward actions, namely, upon the thoughts and affections of the heart, it proceeds to enumerate those more outward duties, those actions and habits, by which a man proves his allegiance to God and maintains communion with Him. The

two classes of duties are very different in their character, and are connected one with the other very much in the same way, in which the root of a tree is connected with the branches and leaves and fruit; the healthy condition of the root, which we do not see, is the source of the healthy condition of those parts of the tree, which we do see; and if the part of the tree above ground be sapless and barren, we may pretty surely conclude that the root is not doing its work. And so faith, fear, and love are the unseen roots of all outward visible practical duties towards God; if these fruits do not appear, we must doubt the healthy condition of the root; and if a man says, I believe in God, I fear Him, and I love Him, with all my heart and mind and soul and strength, we must look for the proof of the truth of his assertion to the manner in which he performs those other duties, which it is more easy to examine and to test. Especially with regard to ourselves, if we profess belief and fear and love, we should do well to remember, that we may easily deceive ourselves, and that to a certainty we have deceived ourselves, if we fancy that we have these roots in our hearts, while yet we have manifestly no fruits of the same in our lives.

Now, in the forefront of this class of duties the Church Catechism places that of *worship;* my

duty towards God is '*to worship Him;*' concerning which expression I will first observe in passing, that it is taken by one well-known commentator upon the Church Catechism,[1] as though it were intended to include all that follows, as though we should read the passage thus, "my duty towards God is to worship Him, *namely*, to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him," and the rest. But this view does not commend itself to me as the true one; for though in a certain sense all acts performed by man to God may be said to come under the name of worship, still there is a certain definite character belonging to the worship of God which belongs to nothing else, and which deserves and demands to be contemplated by itself. I shall endeavour therefore to treat of worship from this point of view, and to shew you in what it really consists; that it is not merely prayer, nor giving of thanks, much less is it the hearing of a sermon; but that it is an act of homage due from man to his Creator and Preserver and Redeemer, and due to no one else, neither angel nor saint; and that the spirit of it is well described in those words of the Psalmist, "O come, let us worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker, for we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."

[1] Bishop Nicholson.

Worship, then, is the hearty acknowledgment of the infinite perfections of God, especially as those perfections stand out in clear and bright contrast to our own manifold imperfections and infirmities. You will remember that description of the worship of God in Heaven, which is contained in Rev. iv.; there we read of the four living creatures who "rest not day and night, saying, Holy Holy Holy Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come. And when those living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, Who liveth for ever and ever, the four-and-twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Now, this description of worship is very valuable for several reasons. In the first place you will perceive that it contains no prayer, nor indeed could it very easily do so, because it belongs to a place in which there are no wants to be supplied; it is not the expression of the thoughts of poor mortals needing daily bread, but that of beings near the throne of God, whose wants are all supplied out of His fulness; and this point gives to worship a very high

character, marking it (as it does) as the employment of Heaven, and as one of those things which will not pass away with the present dispensation. But again; this description brings out twice over that great point in the character of true worship, the humiliation of the worshipper; the four-and-twenty elders, we read, "*fell down*," there was One who sat upon His throne the while, because it was His prerogative to do so, and there was none greater present before whom to prostrate Himself, but the elders could not *sit* while they worshipped,—no—they left *that* for the members of the reformed Church of England of the nineteenth century,—they could not sit, they would have felt the impropriety, not to say the absurdity of such a posture of humiliation; and so they fell down, bent their knees, prostrated themselves before God. And to make the spirit of their worship still more apparent, they "cast their crowns before the throne;" they were beings highly honoured in Heaven, whoever they were, those elders who were permitted to have seats in Heaven and to be clothed with white raiment and to wear crowns of gold; but when they were engaged in worship, they felt that they must needs put off their crowns; no mark of honour could be in keeping, when they were about to perform an act, the very spirit of which was the confession of their own unworthi-

ness; therefore they "cast their crowns before the throne." And once more; they not only confessed their own unworthiness, but their act of worship was just this, the declaration of the worthiness of God. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power"—it is a contemplation of the Majesty of God; it is the plain but sublime utterance of a mind, which has seen God and realised to some extent that marvellous wisdom and power, which created the heavens and the earth. Such was the worship of Heaven; and though it differs, and must differ, considerably from the worship of the Church Militant upon earth, still it shews us distinctly some of the characters of true worship, and brings out certain features, which are essential, and which therefore the worship of the Church on earth ought not by any means to lack.

And here I will remark, that the word, which in the text and in other places of the New Testament we translate by the English *worship*, is one which refers to the posture assumed by a person, who wishes to do great honour, to shew great respect, to another; the word implies the prostration of the body, and so in a figure that tribute of reverence from one person to another, whom he regards as exalted much above himself, which we term worship. And let me remind

you, that this word worship does not originally mean more than honour, respect, reverence; you may find instances in which we still use the word in this its old meaning, as when we speak of persons in high office as worshipful, that is, persons whom we are bound to honour for their office' sake; and again, in the Church Service for the solemnization of Holy Matrimony the words occur, "I thee *worship*," where the word *honour* would according to modern practice better express the meaning to be conveyed; but, as it is convenient to be able to distinguish between different things, which all belong to the same class, by an appropriate distinction of words, it has been customary in modern language to confine the term *worship* to that supreme kind of honour, reverence, and adoration, which belongs of right to God alone. The word worship then, as so understood, and as it occurs in the text, has reference to the posture of body, which would be assumed by a person, who wished above all things to mark his respect for another; that posture may vary, and does vary to some extent in different countries; the character of the Eastern nations is in all things to give a more visible and lively expression to their feelings than seems natural to those of the West, and so a complete prostration of the body upon the ground would

seem in Scripture to be the most usual mode of expressing great honour and respect. I may observe also, that not only is this posture expressed in the Greek word translated *worship* in the text, but the same thing applies to the language of the Old Testament also;[1] the only words which there denote the worship of the true God, are words which properly signify "falling down" or "bowing and prostrating ourselves" before Him. And though of course posture is a thing which can be regulated by no distinct law, and a bowing of the head or bending of the knees may now mean in England quite as much as a complete prostration of the body would have signified in Jerusalem in olden times, still there are certain postures, which by the common consent of all nations are allowed *not* to indicate respect; to sit in a person's presence, for instance, is not respectful according to the principles of any nation under heaven; and therefore it is well worthy of our notice, that the words, which in both the Old Testament and the New imply the highest kind of worship, depend upon the notion of bodily posture; it is worthy of our notice, partly because it may help us to determine whether our own worship is of the right kind, and partly because

[1] Remarked by Bp. Beveridge in his sermon "On the true notion of Public Worship."

it may lead us to some serious questioning, as to whether posture can be quite so trifling a consideration, as many people in these days appear to suppose.

The worship of Almighty God involves both the mind and body; I do not deny that the former is the chief consideration; God looks to the heart, but I believe that He looks to the body too; and though if the body be weak, all postures are alike in the eyes of Him who sees the thoughts and intents of the mind, yet if the body be strong and capable of expressing by those postures which the Church of England orders, and which the Church of all ages—aye and the Great Head of the Church Himself too—have sanctioned by practice, expressing by those postures, I say, the inward humility and submission of the heart, then I cannot believe, that a worship, which substitutes a posture of ease for a posture of reverence, can be of a kind pleasing to Almighty God. Do not think, Christian Brethren, that I am laying stress upon a mere form, a minor matter unworthy of the consideration of a spiritual Christian, when I enforce the truth of there being a right posture for the worship of God and a wrong one; these things are *not* mere forms, they are *not* minor matters; and they demand especial notice from a Christian minister in these times on this ac-

count, that the habit of sitting during confession of sins and prayer to Almighty God has become so common, that it may very well happen that many young persons may have been led into it by the bad example of their elders, without thinking of the extreme impropriety of their conduct; and such young persons may be disposed to listen to the voice of warning, when they are told of their fault, and they may perchance be rescued from their bad habit, and may be the means of teaching more reverent ways to another generation. But however, whether men will bear or whether they will forbear, the Christian minister has but one course, and that is to give a plain rebuke where there is a plain fault. The fact is, that they, who in their private devotions, in their closets alone with God, think it right to worship Him in a manner, which would not be ventured upon by angels and cherubim and seraphim, may (if they will) do the same in Church; but he who would think that to sit in the performance of his private devotion was irreverent and absurd ought not to use that posture in the public worship of God.

I know of course that no posture of devotion can make up for the absence of the reality, and that a man who kneels upon his knees may perchance be as careless of God's presence and

as little attentive to real devotion, as if he adopted a posture of far less reverence; nevertheless the body and mind do help each other or the contrary, and the holiest man and most spiritual that ever lived will find aid to his devotion in attention to its outward circumstances. For indeed, Christian Brethren, the real hearty worship of Almighty God is sufficiently difficult to be performed with every aid; there is so much in the human heart that is proud and wilful and opposed to the ways of God, that it is no slight work to join heartily and in right earnest with those worshippers, whom S. John saw in his vision, and who cast their crowns down before the throne, acknowledging that all honour and glory and majesty belonged of right to Him alone, who sat upon the throne. This, as I have said to you, is the true spirit of worship, and this is the spirit which we must cultivate; and the more carefully we study the ways and works of God, and the more honestly we examine our own, the more we shall be led to perceive the truth of the worship which S. John saw in heaven, and the need of imitating that worship upon earth. The highest view of God is not that, which regards Him as the giver of daily bread and the supplier of wants, to whom therefore we must pray; but we then contemplate Him most rightly, and most enter into the true

spirit of worship, when in the thought of His infinite greatness and goodness and power, and with a vivid sense of His great love to us as shewn in our redemption from sin, we fall down to acknowledge that all honour and glory belong to Him alone.

## SERMON VII.

### TO WORSHIP HIM.

PSALM xcvi. 9.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth stand in awe of Him.

I SPOKE to you last Sunday concerning the duty of worshipping God; that being the first of the active practical duties, which the Church Catechism inculcates. Belief, fear, and love having been laid down as the foundations, worship is the first superstructure raised upon them; and it rightly stands as the first, for though (as I remarked to you) I cannot admit that interpretation, which would make worship to include and be equivalent to all the duties mentioned afterwards, "to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him," and the rest, still unquestionably these other duties if rightly performed do partake of the nature of worship, and he who

knows nothing of worship can know nothing of the other duties as he should know them. Hence I am desirous of laying particular stress upon this duty of worship, and as I was not able to say all that I wished in my last sermon, I intend to devote another to the same subject. The fact is, that in speaking of worship last Sunday, I was led to say so much concerning the posture of body and mind which belong to it, that I had not time to say much concerning worship itself; I do not regret that this was so, because the points of which I treated are very important, and deserving of all the attention which we gave to them; but I should leave the subject very imperfect, if I did not add something to what I have already said; and this is what I now propose to do.

First then, let me remind you what the true foundations of worship are. Worship, you will remember, is the paying of the tribute of honour and praise to Almighty God; it is not of necessity the giving of thanks or the making of a petition; he who says the beginning and end of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,...Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever," does in the truest sense worship God; and the angels in heaven, who have no petitions to make, still join in worship;

worship is the tribute of honour and praise to Almighty God, and for the offering up of this worship aright there are two principal requisites.

In the first place, a true worshipper must have a profound sense of his own weakness and sinfulness and unworthiness. If he has not this, he will worship himself; it is the very tendency of human nature to be proud and self-sufficient, to think much of what it can do, to make little of its shortcomings; we see this in people of our own day, as clearly as we see it in the man and woman whom God first created; what could be more preposterous and absurd than that bait which Satan held out to Adam and Eve, that they should become as gods by disobeying their Maker? and yet the result shewed, that the tempter struck a chord, which at once found a response in Eve's heart; this promise of independence manifestly had charms for her, and because she had not a due sense of her own weakness and her need of the power and presence of God, she fell into the snare. And hence it is, that for us all the great requisite of our souls is to be convinced of sin; a man cannot worship God aright, who has not been so convinced; if we were pure as our first parents were pure, we should require to know the danger of sin, our extreme

liability to fall into it, the impossibility of successfully resisting it except through the power of the Holy Ghost; but we, as fallen creatures, need much more, we must feel that we have committed sin, that it is the very misery of our condition that we do commit it, that we are naturally prone to it, and that in God is our only refuge from it. He who has learned this,—not as a mere book-lesson, but as a truth to which his inmost soul gives a testimony which he cannot resist,—he, and he only, can worship God, so as a fallen creature ought to worship Him.

This then I speak of, as the first of the two principal requisites for the right worship of God. The other is a corresponding sense of God's greatness, and goodness, and majesty. The sense of our own weakness is manifestly useless without this; the one may shew us the need of some object of worship, but it will only lead us to fall down before stocks and stones, before gods of our own making, if we have not also a sense of the greatness and supremacy of God. And it is manifest, that the effect of worship upon the mind is good or bad, just according as the object of worship is a worthy one or not; the heathen feels the need of some object of worship, he knows something of his own wretchedness and weakness, but because he knows not God he makes an idol

for himself, and says, "deliver me for thou art my God;" and because he worships something lower than himself, he becomes debased instead of being exalted, worse instead of better. What then must we do? We must look up to God, such as He has revealed Himself to us, Him the one Creator of our souls and bodies, the Lord of the universe, the Preserver of all things, who counts the hairs of our heads, and without whose leave not a sparrow falls to the ground; still more must we look up to Him as the great Redeemer of our race, Him who saved our souls from destruction and has given us command to call Him our Father, Him too who sanctifies us and all His children, and gives us grace to rise above the condition to which Satan would depress us, and to become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; we must look up to God who has revealed Himself to us thus, and looking upon Him so we shall feel sure that we have found what we need, the true object of worship, the only Being before whom we can prostrate ourselves without becoming slaves, by worshipping whom we can alone become free, and rise to the true dignity and glory for which we were created at the first.

These two foundations then having been laid, a man becomes by the very fact a *worshipper;*

I mean that if he feels his own weakness, sinfulness, and insufficiency, and at the same time the power, holiness, and completeness of God, as He has revealed Himself to us, he cannot fail of prostrating Himself before God; this will be the necessary result of his convictions; and worship will be to him a constant abiding habit of mind. I do not mean that he will be constantly in church, or constantly saying prayers, but a man may worship without either the one or the other; when I say that a man's worship will be constant, I mean that this will be the constant tone of his thoughts, he will continually recognise God's hand, the world will be to him God's world, God will be about his path continually, and he will measure all his actions and thoughts according to the laws of God. And so he will continually worship God, because he will continually honour Him; even as the worship of God in Heaven is constant, for though even there perhaps the direct offering of prayers may not be without intermission, yet the worship is never intermitted, because each act is done to His glory, and His will is there the measure of all thoughts and deeds. I suppose that the perfect state of being would be that, in which no one moment more than another was set apart for the especial worship of God; but forasmuch as such a condition is not

possible for us in this life, we rightly set apart particular times and occasions for that, which we call more peculiarly the worship of God; and as I wish to give to my remarks upon this subject as much as possible of a practical character, I propose to say something concerning each of the chief forms of worship.

Now there are three kinds of worship, to which I desire especially to direct your attention, and neither of which ought to be neglected by an earnest servant of God.

First there is *private* worship. Each Christian has his own particular relation to Almighty God; each man has to be judged according to his own works, and the salvation of each human soul is a matter between that soul and God, with which all the whole world beside cannot interfere. Hence private prayer is a manifest spiritual necessity for every man. Our blessed Lord recognised it as a duty; He did not command it, but took it for granted; He only gave directions concerning the manner of it, telling us that the more retired it was the better, and that our own closet with the door closed, where none but God can see us, is a better place than the corner of the street, where men can witness our devotions. And I need not tell you, how that our Lord by His own practice, withdrawing Himself from

the crowd, and spending sometimes the whole night in prayer, bore the strongest testimony that He could bear to the necessity of this particular kind of prayer. But it would be useless to lay much stress upon this necessity, because every one of the smallest degree of Christian earnestness admits it, every one knows that he cannot live without this daily bread. It is to my purpose however to remark, that this daily prayer must be daily worship, not the mere importunity of a beggar, but an ascription of glory and praise. The feeling of need, need of forgiveness of sins and of the supply of daily wants temporal and spiritual, is no doubt sufficient reason and a very good reason too, to bring a Christian daily upon his knees in his closet; but worship involves something beyond this, and even if we had no daily sins to deplore, and no daily wants to be supplied, we ought still to desire daily communion for the offering up of our praise and the acknowledgment of the greatness and goodness of God. Hence it is, that in some manuals of private devotion you will find a direction for repeating daily the Apostles' Creed; such a direction is more useful and wise than it may at first sight appear to be; such profession of faith forms indeed no part of prayer properly so called, but it is a declaration of faith in, and allegiance to, God

the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and as such is a right expression of the feelings of a worshipper. The worship of Heaven, to which I called your attention last Sunday, is very much of this kind; the elders say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created;" and this very nearly agrees with the expression of the Creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:" so again, that new song in honour of the Lamb, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation," suggests the same thoughts as those which ought to belong to us when we say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who suffered, was dead, and buried." But in whatever form praise be introduced, praise ought to form a part of daily devotion, and it is by this ascription of praise honour and glory to God, that daily prayer becomes emphatically daily worship.

The second kind of worship of which I propose to speak is what is called *family* or *social* worship. The duty of paying this tribute to Almighty God devolves only upon some of us; all are not masters or mistresses of families; but those who are must remember, that upon them, as such, falls a new

duty, in addition to that which belongs to them as individual Christians. When God blessed Abraham and determined to make of him a great nation, it was because He knew him "that he would command his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment:"[1] and when Joshua put before the children of Israel the choice of serving or not serving the God of their fathers, he said on his own behalf, "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Joshua felt (you will observe) that he might answer for others beside himself; and every head of a family ought to feel the same. That commandment, you will remember, which lays down the duty of the Sabbath, expressly includes the sons and daughters and servants; it regards a man, who is the head of a family, as responsible, not merely for his own conduct, but for that of those over whom he is placed. And this is undoubtedly the true view of a man's position; the family is not an invention of man, it is an ordinance of God; it is strictly a religious institution, because it is God's institution; and consequently, if it be a man's duty to worship God Himself, it is His duty to take care, that, so far as in him lies, God shall be worshipped in his

[1] Gen. xviii. 19.

family. Family worship, then, is a duty which no one ought to neglect; and a family has little right to expect God's blessing, which does not as a family ascribe honour and praise to Him. Whether it be in all cases possible to bring a family together daily for the purpose of united prayer and praise, is a point which I will not venture to decide; there *may* be cases in which it is not possible; but this I know for certain, that there are also cases, in which I should myself have thought it impossible, and in which nevertheless it has been done. The fact is, that no one can say what is possible until he tries; the slothful man always sees a lion in the street; but frequently when an attempt is made difficulties vanish; and I am sure, that if there be cases, in which family worship is prevented by the necessary business of the world, those cases are very rare.

The last kind of worship, to which I have to direct your attention, is, as you may suppose, *public worship*. This is a duty distinct from the other two, and quite as important as either of them. There are two points to which I will confine my remarks, in speaking of the public worship of God.

First I would have you to note, that the duty of public worship depends upon the fact

of our being members of a Church, members of a body of which Christ is the head. When we meet together in church for public service, it is not that a certain number of private Christians have agreed, for the sake of convenience, to perform their devotions all in one place and at one time; but it is that they have common benefits to acknowledge, a common Saviour to glorify, a common faith to express; and they only appear in the fulness of their privileges as Christians, when they appear together in the congregation. Attendance at church, therefore, is in no way optional with a Christian; he may not think, that private devotion can make up for the want of attendance upon public; and this is seen most clearly, when we remember that the great feature of public worship was amongst the early Christians, and ought to be amongst ourselves, the celebration of the Lord's Supper; for this holy sacrament bears witness to, and cements, in the most unspeakable manner, that unity amongst Christians, upon which the necessity of public worship depends. Prayer may be private, a sermon may be read at home, but the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper cannot be private, must be partaken of in the company of the faithful.

The other point, which I wish you to note,

is, that the public service of the Church of England is, as that of the Catholic Church always has been, full of worship in the truest sense. I told you that to worship meant to *honour;* and though confession of sins does in a certain sense do honour to God, and though the same may be said in a manner of listening patiently and teachably to the reading of God's word or the teaching of God's ministers, still it is not in these parts of the Church service that we should chiefly look for that, which we should describe as worship: but I wish you to observe, that there is a considerable portion of the service to which this character most entirely belongs, especially the Psalms and Canticles with which the service is broken: remember for instance the Psalm which we use in the Morning Service, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation;" how thoroughly does this Psalm breathe the genuine spirit of worship! and the same may be said of that noble hymn, "We praise Thee O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord,"—the glories of God (you see) recited, and His praises declared with a full voice. The same thing too may be said of the repetition of the Creeds: they too are worship; they are recited, not merely for the preservation of an orthodox faith, but as an act of homage, a

declaration of allegiance to Him in whom we believe; and indeed, I do not know that any act of worship can be more truly worthy of the name, than that which a congregation perform, when with one heart and voice they declare their belief in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And once more, the same thing may be asserted in the fullest manner of the celebration of the Lord's Supper; in this case the worship is the more exalted, as the service upon which it depends is more sublime; and the spirit of worship is perhaps in no instance so thoroughly concentrated, as when, after the celebration of those holy mysteries, the congregation endeavour as it were to give vent to their feelings in that beautiful hymn, which commences thus, "Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good will towards men." This spirit of worship then I say, Christian Brethren, pervades our Church of England service; it ought to do so; be thankful that you have such a service; and beware of exchanging the privilege of using it, for any of those substitutes, which the religion of modern times has devised.

Thus then I have called your attention, Christian Brethren, to three different forms of worship, private, family, and public. I have done this briefly and imperfectly; but still what I have said

will answer the purpose, if only you have paid attention to it. I wish you to see, that all these three kinds of worship are in the truest sense *duties:*—the first is a duty, because each of us has to stand or fall before his Master, and to be judged by Him according to his works;—the second is a duty, because we have been placed by God in families, and the head of a family is answerable, not only for himself, but in a manner for the members of his family too;—the third is a duty, because we are members of one Church, and have common acts of worship to perform, common blessings to acknowledge, common sacraments to celebrate, for which no private worship can be a substitute. I have only to say in conclusion, that it is for you to ask yourselves, how you are performing these duties; you may be performing them diligently and still imperfectly, for they are difficult duties to perform well; or you may be performing them carelessly, and if so, to a certainty you are performing them badly; or possibly, one or more of them you may not be performing at all. Well, Christian Brethren, I can only remind you that they *are* duties, that it is at your peril you neglect them, that it is your privilege and happiness to perform them; and what is more, to worship God is the only privilege and happiness belonging to another

world, and he who has not learnt at least the rudiments of true worship in this life, can hardly expect to be able to join, as he ought, in that full and constant worship in the beauty of holiness, which constitutes the happiness of the life to come.

# SERMON VIII.

## TO GIVE HIM THANKS.

EPHESIANS v. 20.

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I AM to speak to you to-day, according to the course of the Sermons in which I am at present engaged, concerning that duty of giving thanks to God, which the Church Catechism puts immediately after that of worshipping Him. "To worship Him, to give Him thanks"—such is the order of duties, in the formula which we have now for some Sundays past been considering. I remarked upon a former occasion, that although the duty of worshipping God could not be regarded as merely equivalent to the sum of all the duties subsequently mentioned in the Church Catechism, still those duties did unquestionably partake of the character of worship; and this is pre-eminently the case with the duty of thanks-

giving; "whoso offereth me thanks and praise," says the Psalm, "he honoureth Me"—he *worshippeth* Me. So far as it goes thanksgiving *is* worship; not the whole, but an important part of it; and one, the omission of which will certainly mar the whole. For it is manifest, that if we be indeed dependent upon God for every blessing temporal and spiritual, then we may not come into His presence without avowing that dependence; if He has given us life and breath and all things, we must thank Him for such gifts; if He has forgiven us our sins, we must thank Him for such forgiveness; if He has redeemed us, we must acknowledge that we are redeemed; if He has revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ, then we are not worthy of that revelation if we do not express our gratitude; yea our tongues have been given to us for this great end above others, that we should be able to declare the praises of God and shew forth our thankfulness to Him. Hence thanksgiving is a great feature in all true worship; it appears as such in the service of the Church of England, as I shall notice more particularly by-and-bye; and the instinct of a Christian heart will ensure a place to it in every approach to the mercy-seat, which is made in private. Nevertheless the duty of thanksgiving presents for our consideration points distinct from those, which the

duty of worship in general brings before us, and some of the chief of these points I propose to draw out and discuss.

Now I have chosen for a text a verse from S. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, which supplies us in a very few words with a remarkably complete guide in the matter of thanksgiving; and I think that I cannot do better than bring before you in order the several points, which the text contains.

In the first place, I would have you notice, that S. Paul speaks of giving thanks "unto God and the Father." The person described under these two titles is of course one and the same, but the thoughts which belong to the two titles are very different; the name of *God* may be said chiefly to testify of *power*, that of *Father* chiefly of *love;* it is because God has allowed Himself to be addressed as "our Father," that we can draw nigh to Him with full assurance of faith. And even if you say, that the name "the Father" in the text does not mean *our* Father but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, still the same conclusion holds; for it is the fact of God having revealed Himself to us, not merely as the Creator of the world, but as the Father of Jesus Christ, as having "so loved the world that He sent His Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish

but have everlasting life,"—it is this fact, I say, which is the ground of our new relationship to God, and of the gratitude which consequently we owe to Him. Whether therefore we take the expression in the text, "God and the Father," as implying "God our Father," or "God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ," it is all one, so far, as the present question is concerned; either way the name of Father is the great root of thanksgiving; either way the name may be expanded, so as to include all those grounds, upon which the duty of giving thanks depends; when the Church Catechism teaches the child to say "My duty towards God is ..... to give Him thanks," a sufficient reason for the teaching may be found in this, that the child has already been taught to say "I believe in God the Father."

Next observe, that in the text S. Paul directs, that thanks be given to the Father "in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." I notice this, not only because it puts in a very striking point of view the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, but because it throws a remarkable light upon the nature of thanksgiving. Our natural feeling would (I think) be this, that if we came to ask any favour or mercy at the hands of God, we should rightly do so in the name of Him, through whom alone our

petitions can be granted, but that the same thing would hardly hold good, if we came to pay the tribute of praise and thanksgiving to God; in *asking* we should feel that we needed a mediator, in *giving* (however small our gift might be) we should scarcely imagine that the same need existed. And yet, according to S. Paul, the need is the same in both cases; even our thanks must be offered up through Christ; we do not make God our debtor by such offerings; whether we ask or whether we pay tribute, it is we, who are the gainers, and for both the one purpose and the other we need the righteousness of Christ, to make our approach to God's mercy-seat acceptable. Have you always remembered this, Christian Brethren, have you always borne in mind, when you thank God for His mercies, that if Christ were not at the right hand of God, even your tribute of thanks and praise would not be an offering pure enough to be accepted at His throne?

But again; S. Paul in the text gives a very wide range to thanksgiving, when he speaks of "giving thanks for *all* things." Two classes of things at once suggest themselves to us, temporal and spiritual; it is clearly our duty to give thanks both for the one and for the other, as we do continually in that general form of thanksgiving,

which we use in our Morning and Evening Prayers; the blessings belonging to this life, and those which belong in the fulness of their fruition to the life to come, must both be included in the list of subjects of thanksgiving. If I had time, I might say much upon the comparative heartiness with which men give their thanks for these two classes of blessing; and I might suggest it to you, as a matter worthy of your attention, to examine whether you yourselves do really feel as grateful for the invisible gifts of grace and the hopes of glory, as you do for the more palpable blessings of this present world; but I omit this part of the subject, in order to notice, that S. Paul probably means by the expression "all things" more than the sum of those classes of blessings of which I have been speaking; I apprehend that he means to suggest to us, that as "all things work together for good to those who love God," so to the same persons all things should be matter for thanksgiving; I admit that when things appear not prosperous, we may feel it difficult to give thanks to God with sincerity, we may be disposed to say like Jacob, "All these things are against me,"—and I would not wish any one to act the hypocrite with God, and to pretend a gratitude which he does not feel,—I only wish to point out this, as being the head and crown of Christian

perfection, that all the dispensations of God should be regarded as the acts of a Father, and therefore as demanding our thanks. But I know the difficulty of realising this state of mind; a time may perhaps come, when we shall be able to look back from our place of rest upon the way by which God hath led us, and when we shall be able to see that in all its turns and twistings, (so far as they were the result of God's leading, and not due to our own perversity,) and in all its darker passages, in its roughest as well as its smoothest portions, it was indeed "the right way," and all demands our gratitude to Him, who led us by a way that we knew not.

There is one other expression in the text which deserves notice, and to which a remark applies similar to that just now made upon the expression "all things." S. Paul says, "giving thanks always;" the word "always" is sufficiently strong and comprehensive in itself, and becomes additionally so by being joined to the words "all things." "Giving thanks always for all things" is obviously as comprehensive a charge to give thanks as could possibly be devised; and I wish to remark, that the peculiar force of the word "always" seems to be this, "under all circumstances." S. Paul is not intending (I think) so much to enjoin an unceasing course of thanks-

giving, as to warn us against allowing our thankfulness to depend upon our own state of mind, or upon the prosperity or adversity of our outward condition; a person may be in high health and spirits, and the mere buoyancy of his feelings may find vent in gratitude to God for His mercies—this is well, but will the same person be able to thank God heartily, if God should please to take away his health and his spirits and lay him upon a sick bed? any one can (so to speak) bless God in prosperity, or fancy that he does so, but to thank God in adversity is another matter—can he do that? Or again; most of us,—some much more than others, are liable to great ups and downs of feeling; sometimes everything looks bright, sometimes gloomy; in some cases we can hardly account for the change which comes over us, in some it may be merely the effect of bodily health; but anyhow we are very liable to make our feelings towards God vary with these our own private spiritual feelings, and in doing so we break the Apostolic rule; we do *not* give thanks *always;* we give thanks when our feelings happen to be warm and excited; our thanks and our feelings grow cold together; this should not be so; the mercies of God in Jesus Christ are too great to be treated thus, and he, who really sees himself as redeemed from sin by the blood of the Son of God,

will find *always* in this a spring of grateful feeling, however barren and dry all else may seem at the time to be.

So much then for S. Paul's directions in the text, as to the manner of giving thanks: he tells us, *to whom* we are to give them, namely, to God and the Father, or to God because He is our Father and the Father of the Lord; he tells us *how* we are to give them so that they will be accepted, namely, through our Lord Jesus Christ; he tells us further, *for what* we are to give thanks, namely for all things, not for this or that which may happen especially to suit our tastes, but for all His dealings with us, even for those which at the time we least comprehend; and lastly, he tells us, *when* we are to give thanks, namely, always, not only when our feelings are excited and our hearts warm, but even when our prospects are dark and our spirits faint. A very comprehensive set of directions these, as I have before remarked; and they are well worthy of your study for this reason amongst others, that there are few duties in which you are more likely to grow slovenly and slow than in that of thanksgiving; and the cause is this, that the chief things for which we have to give thanks to God are common things, such as we are thoroughly accustomed to receive, and which on that very account do not call forth in our hearts

such lively feelings, as more uncommon, though less valuable, marks of bounty might do. This is obvious with respect to the common gifts of this life; the air which we breathe, the bread which we eat, the health which we enjoy, the freedom of the country in which we live, these and the like blessings are so common, that we may easily forget how great is the bounty of God which has blessed us with them, and how much such bounty deserves our daily or rather our continual praise. And even with regard to the great spiritual blessings which we enjoy, the privilege of living in a land where the true God is known, and where the Bible is an open book, and where Christ's sacraments are administered, and where the Gospel is preached to the poor, nay the very privilege of redemption itself, the great gift of Christ as the Saviour of mankind from misery,—these things may easily and not unfrequently do cease, from the very fact of our familiarity with them, to affect our minds as deeply as they should. And I allude to this the rather, because it gives me occasion to notice one great purpose, and one great advantage, of our Sunday assemblies in church; I speak of the Sunday assemblies, because few persons (comparatively speaking) can join in public worship on other days, and Sunday must for ever be the great and principal day for Christian assemblies; now

the public worship of the Church is a service of praise and thanksgiving; it is this quite as much as a service of prayer and supplication; the very motto of it may be said to be expressed by those two sentences in the commencement of it, "O Lord, open Thou our lips, and our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise." And a meeting of Christians upon the first day of the week, the feast of Christ's resurrection, the day on which mankind may be said to have risen from the grave with Christ, must of necessity be one in which thanksgiving and joy will be the ruling features of the worship; a Christian may be lowspirited when in his chamber by himself, but he can scarcely fail to put on the garment of joy and to feel his heart swell with thankfulness, when he goes up to the temple of God to celebrate with his brethren the mercies of Him who redeemed them. Hence, however much a Christian may forget thanksgiving as a duty of private devotion, he cannot do so in public worship; and the precept of the apostle in the text will be best observed by those, who are the most regular and devout in their attendance in this house of God. It may seem strange, after what I have just now said, that it should have been alleged in times gone by, that the service of the Church of England was deficient in thanksgiving; many of you are however aware, that it

was only at the very last revision of the Prayer Book,[1] that the general thanksgiving, which we use in our Morning and Evening Service, was added, evidently with the intention of supplying this defect. I will not discuss the question of the degree to which such defect did previously exist; I will only say, that in earlier times, when the service of the Christian Church on Sunday was not the ordinary daily prayer, but the service of Holy Communion, such complaint could not have existed; for it is to be noted, and that especially with reference to our present subject—the Christian duty of giving thanks to God—that the very name of the Sunday service was the Eucharist, or the Thanksgiving; no Christian could ever doubt whether to give thanks were a part of his duty towards God, when he belonged to a body, whose public worship had this stamped emphatically upon it, that it was a Eucharist or service of Thanksgiving. And indeed, who could join in those solemn mysteries earnestly and devoutly, with any other feeling than that of unbounded gratitude in his heart? To see Jesus Christ manifestly set forth, crucified dead and risen again, in the midst of us, His flesh made the food of men, His death their life, to see this and to be permitted

[1] In 1662.

to receive the pledge of communion with Him, the assurance of salvation through His blood—what feelings *can* all this produce? if it be all *true*—if it be not a mere delusion and empty show—it can only produce one effect, namely that of thankfulness and devotion. And therefore the Eucharistic service does terminate with a noble hymn of thanksgiving; this is the end of it all, this its summit and crown; and when the congregation have thus expressed their thanks, the Priest dismisses them with the Peace of God. There is no other service which ends thus; others terminate with prayer, this with praise; and this termination with praise, as it belongs to our highest act of worship, so is it the termination of the highest kind; it is most like the worship of Heaven, where thanksgiving and praise never cease.

Hence then a Christian may learn, that to give thanks is a part of the duty which he owes to God, by joining in the public worship of God in church, and specially by joining in that service, in which all Christians are bound to join, which we call emphatically the Eucharist or the Service of Thanksgiving. But I must also add, that no man can worthily and acceptably give thanks to God, by joining in ever so noble a public expression of thanks; for thanksgiving is, as our Book of Common Prayer expresses it, a matter not only

for the lips, but for the life; gratitude must be shewn not by word only, but by deed; a gratitude which consists merely in word, whether it be gratitude towards God or towards man, is, as we all know, thoroughly contemptible and abominable. To give thanks to God is therefore after all a very practical matter; and this lesson is taught in that Eucharistic service, of which I have been just now speaking, by the call which is made upon all those who join in it, to commence their devotion by offering of their substance for the service of God and the benefit of the poor. But treating the subject more generally I should say, that he, who deems himself to have received great mercies from God, ought to shew his gratitude by a new life. And when I speak of having received great mercies, the question is not, who has? but, who has not? for are we not all redeemed? and as redeemed, bought with a price, saved from Satan, reconciled to God, what can we do but yield our bodies and souls a living sacrifice to God? Do not let us babble about gratitude, but let us shew it in our deeds; he who purifies himself, because he knows that he has been redeemed by Christ's blood, and who loves his brethren because Christ loved him, and who is merciful to others because God has been merciful—this is the man, who gives thanks to God, and whose thankoffering will be

accepted. Again, if a man has received from God many of the comforts of this present world, then he should shew his thankfulness by being liberal to the poor, by supporting charitable institutions, by being ready to help in any good and pious work, and by other deeds of this kind. This is true thanksgiving; of course a man may deceive himself (if he be so disposed) in this as in other things; he may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet have no charity; but anyhow a man is not in the right way, who does not abound in such deeds; if a man may feed the poor and yet have no charity, at all events that man has no charity who leaves the poor to starve; a fruit tree may produce fruit which turns out after all to be good for nothing, but this will not lead people to stock their gardens with trees which bear no fruit whatever; no—thanks to God involve thankofferings, and it is for us to take care that our offerings be genuine and acceptable to God; "he who has this world's goods and seeth his brother in need and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in *him?*"

And once more; a person, who is sensible of having received great spiritual gifts from God, must shew his gratitude by endeavouring to spread abroad those gifts. It is the very genius and spirit of Christ's religion to be diffusive; no man who

has known Christ can ever wish to keep such knowledge to himself; in the very beginning of the Gospel, it has been truly observed, that when Andrew had become acquainted with Jesus, his first step was to find his own brother Simon and tell him the discovery he had made. So has it been ever since, and always will be, with those who have been really taught by Christ; Christian Missions are supported upon this principle; all efforts to make Christian knowledge penetrate into the dark corners of our land, or to give to poor children a sound religious education, are founded upon this same principle. And he who feels most deeply the spiritual blessings, which he has himself received as a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven, will be the most earnest in his desire to shew forth his thankfulness by substantial acts of Christian benevolence. There are abundant means supplied to every one in this country of doing so if he will; a man may preach the Gospel to the heathen, without becoming a missionary; and he may preach the Gospel to the poor of his own country, without becoming himself an ordained minister. And perhaps I may be allowed to observe in conclusion, that those Societies, which enable him thus to spread the knowledge of Christ, should be looked upon by each Christian as twice

blest, blessing those to whom the knowledge is given, and blessing those who are by such means able to exhibit their gratitude, and to shew forth their thankfulness in their deeds.

## SERMON IX.

### TO PUT MY WHOLE TRUST IN HIM.

ISAIAH xxvi. 3, 4.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.

Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

IN speaking of our duties towards God and our privileges as children of God, it is very difficult to distinguish one from the other. Indeed it is perhaps impossible, because in every case that which is a duty is a privilege, and that which is a privilege is a duty. With regard to our relations to our fellowmen this may not always be the case; I may be so situated, that I have a duty to perform towards another, and that duty may be a very unpleasant one; it may be impossible to perform it without a heavy heart, I may do it because I think it right, but (look at it which way I may) I may be unable to regard it as a privilege:

as for instance, when the Apostle instructed Christian slaves to be submissive and obedient to their masters, he laid down a duty, but could scarcely urge it as a privilege; on the other hand, the privilege would be that of gaining their freedom, which the Apostle would have them to do, if it might be done lawfully. Yet even in this case I may remark, that so soon as a duty, even as apparently secular as that of obedience to a heathen master, came to be regarded as one which should be performed for Christ's sake, that the word of God might not be blasphemed, so soon was there something of the nature of privilege belonging to its fulfilment; for a duty, which was to be performed conscientiously for the love of Christ, to be performed in such a way, as that the Christian temper should be exhibited and God glorified in the patience and gentleness of His servants,—a duty, which was to be thus performed, was at once lifted out of the lower rank of worldly duties, it became a duty towards God, and was capable of bringing down blessing upon the head of him who discharged it aright; and so it might be regarded in the light of a privilege. For I would observe to you, in order that what I say may be understood by all, that the distinction between duty and privilege is this: a duty is something which we *ought* to do, which we are bound to do, which we are

guilty if we do not perform: a privilege is something which is permitted to us, granted to us, in the possession or doing of which we rejoice for its own sake. For instance, it is a privilege to be a Christian, and it is a consequent duty to be holy as Christ was holy: it is a privilege to have a sufficiency of this world's goods, it is a consequent duty to be liberal to the poor: it is a privilege to have a good education, it is a duty to set an example of orderly conduct: it is a privilege to have a voice in the government of the country, it is a duty to eschew corruption and hold fast a pure conscience. I say then, that so far as human duties are concerned, we may perhaps look at them apart from privilege; we may say, that such a thing is a duty, but a very unpleasant one, one which we should be glad to escape, one which we can perceive it to be no privilege to perform; but in things divine the two can scarcely be separated; they may be separated in thought, but they cannot and do not exist one apart from the other; if a certain course of conduct be part of our duty towards God, it is so because it is in accordance with all that is right, and suitable to our nature, that we should pursue that course of conduct; and any argument, which would shew that a certain thing was a duty towards God, would be quite as available for the proof, that the same thing was a privilege.

These remarks I deem it most desirable that you should bear in mind, because there is a tendency in the minds of many persons to separate these two things, which God has joined together; there is a tendency to regard the performance of duty towards God,—what we commonly call religion,—as a painful sacrifice, as something extorted under the fear of everlasting torments, not as a privilege, but as the giving up of privileges lest a worse thing should come to us. I do not say that any one of ourselves would take such a view, though I cannot but feel sure that there are many persons, who come to church, who do not take a much deeper and more holy view; but certainly, this is the kind of popular notion of the claims of God upon our service and obedience; and the fact is proved by this, that, as a general rule, men and women do not make their duty towards God the serious business of their lives, until they fancy they have clear intimation of the end of their lives being at hand, and then they set themselves to work to read the Bible, and to pray, and to make their peace with God—*peace with God*, forsooth! as though He were an enemy, with whom they had all their lives been contending, instead of a Father, who had all their lives been beckoning to them and moving them by His Spirit. I need not tell you, that such a view of God is a very

false and dreadful one; but I wish you to perceive, that such a view would be at once sent back to the father of lies, who invented and who encourages it in our minds, if we could always hold firm the great truth of which I have been speaking, that in matters pertaining to God privilege is duty, and duty is privilege; that which it is right for us to do, that it is also best for us to do; our fears, our tastes, our affections, our best interests ought all to point one way; and that which binds us most closely to God and His commandments holds us most securely from ruin, and keeps us in the paths of pleasantness and peace.

I might have said as much as this, Christian Brethren, in connexion with any one of those duties towards God which we have hitherto considered; but I have done so especially with reference to that duty which comes before us to-day, because it seems to me that it is of all the duties towards God the one, in connexion with which the character of privilege shines forth the most brightly and undeniably. The point of duty, to which I have to direct your attention in this sermon, is that of "putting our whole trust in God;" it is my *duty*, says the child in the Church Catechism, "to put my whole trust in Him;" and I say that this is a duty, in which the character of privilege shines forth with a degree of brightness,

surpassing that which belongs to almost every other duty in the catalogue. Indeed, contemplating it from some points of view, one might almost say, that it was a mistake to call it a duty, that it was a privilege and nothing else. The case would seem to be almost parallel, if we were to say of a child, that it was its duty to trust entirely in its parents' love; and it *is* a child's duty no doubt, but one would rather say that it was the greatest privilege possessed by a child, that it has parents to love it and to take care of it, and to whom the child may tell its griefs and from whom it may find comfort; it is an instinct of a hurt child to run to its mother, and the instinct proves the privilege. So with regard to our relation to God; surely the very need we all feel in this world is, that of some one stronger than ourselves on whom to rest; in the midst of the uncertainty of this world, and under the sense of our own weakness and the impossibility of finding anywhere upon earth the support of our souls, the satisfaction of our deepest wants, the chief privilege which can be granted to us is that of being permitted to repose with confidence upon the eternal love and power of God. Doubtless the Church Catechism is right in classing this as a duty; beyond all doubt it *is* a duty, and what punishment can be too great for him who neglects it? but

really we ought to feel almost ashamed so to speak of it; when we remember what God has done for us, in order to shew that we may safely rest upon Him, when we contemplate the marvellous scheme of human redemption, endeavour to realise to some extent the condescension involved in the incarnation and death of Christ, and remember that all this was done because "God so loved the world,"—we can scarcely venture to talk of the *duty* of trusting in Him; that which constitutes the great mark of our position as redeemed men, and which has been consigned to us by the blood of Jesus Christ, would seem to be undervalued as a privilege, when we call it by the colder name of duty.

Whether, however, we regard trust in God as a duty or as a privilege, there is a good deal which may be said about it; as a duty, it is one, not so easily performed as might perhaps be imagined; and as a privilege, it is much more easily abused than used aright. Out of the many passages, which might have been taken from Holy Scripture, as texts for a sermon upon trust in God, I have chosen those very beautiful words from a song contained in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, which I have already read to you. The prophet is looking forward to the time, when the land of Judah should be freed from all enemies without and from wickedness within, when a king should

reign in righteousness, and the people should be in heart as well as in name God's people. The fulfilment of the prophecy would seem to be referable to the coming of Christ, and the establishment of His kingdom in the world; but with this I am not at present concerned; I only wish to remark to you, that it is in anticipation of this glorious day of redemption, which Isaiah's prophetic eye was able to see, that he prepared that beautiful hymn from which I have taken the text. "In that day," says the prophet, "shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Now in these words you have the lesson of trusting in God, and in Him alone, and in Him wholly and completely, given as clearly as can possibly be; so you have in many other texts of Scripture; but I have chosen this, on account of the singularly beautiful figure, which the prophet has introduced, in order to support the principle of trust in God; "the Lord Jehovah," says the prophet, "is everlasting strength," or as the margin of your Bibles gives it, "the Lord

Jehovah is the Rock of Ages," the eternal everlasting rock. Now the thought suggested by this is very obvious; it suggests to us the notion of a firm basis for human faith, and confidence, and trust, in the midst of all the confusion which has been brought into the world by sin, all the uncertainty belonging to the things of this life, all the perils arising from the malice of Satan and his angels. You will remember, that when our Lord brought to a conclusion His Sermon on the Mount, He did so by comparing the character of the man, who heard His sayings and did them not, with the character of the man, who heard them and did them; and He illustrated the difference between the two men by the comparison of a foolish and a wise builder, one of whom built his house upon the sand and the other upon a rock; in the one case the rain and wind came, and beat upon the house, and it fell because it had no sufficient foundation; in the other the rain and wind could produce no effect, because the house was founded *upon a rock*. So, in like manner, when our Lord wished to express the firmness of the Church which He was building, He said, "Upon this *Rock* I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" it is no matter, so far as my purpose is concerned, whether in these words our Lord referred to S. Peter or to the doctrine which

S. Peter had declared; I only wish you to notice the manner, in which the figure of a rock is used, as denoting unchangeableness, stability, fixity. I could easily point out to you other instances; as where Hannah, in her song of thanksgiving for Samuel, says, "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside Thee: neither is there any *rock* like our God;" or where David says, "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His tabernacle: yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me upon a *rock of stone*." I could easily (as I have said) point out other instances; but those which I have given you will sufficiently answer my purpose, and will shew you, how that, in speaking of God (as the prophet does in the text) under the figure of the everlasting rock, he refers in the simplest and most forcible manner to that unchanging character of God's purposes and dealings, which is the true ground of our sure confidence in Him. For I would have you to remark, that this unchanging character *does* belong to God's purposes and dealings; it may seem to be otherwise to our imperfect sight and childish apprehension, but in reality it is not otherwise, the purposes of God from eternity to eternity are one, and His dealings ever consistent with themselves: that this is so I think we are bound to believe, in virtue of the very idea of God; if it

were not so, God would be no God; He who is liable to change of conduct, and vacillation of purpose, may be powerful as compared with ourselves, may be good as compared with ourselves, but perfect He cannot be, and therefore He cannot be God. Therefore, however much appearances may be against us, whatever difficulty may seem to lie in the way of supporting our principle by facts, still I believe that in opposition to all appearances, and on the ground of that high reason with which God has endowed us, we should be justified in declaring that the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting Rock; whatever else may change, He changeth not. But in reality, He who takes a broad view of God's dealings with the world will not be at a loss to perceive a thread, running through them all, and giving to them a unity and consistency which a careless observer might miss. He will perceive, that in spite of all the disturbing forces introduced by sin, things have ever worked together towards the great manifestation of God for the redemption of mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. Looking upon the history of the world as the history of human redemption, there is one purpose running through the whole; and because God has ever been true to this purpose, and has not suffered the gates of hell to thwart it and bring it to nought, therefore we may say, that the acts of

God affirm that truth, which our reason will not allow us to let go; and moreover that the unity and consistency of God's operation in carrying out this great work, upon which our salvation depends, is the fittest exhibition possible to illustrate for us that unchangeable character, upon which are grounded at once the duty, the privilege, and the possibility, of putting our whole trust in Him.

For, in truth, the unchangeableness of God is an unchangeableness of love to the race of man. I grant that the character, which I should maintain as capable of proof from the very idea of God, and which I believe that experience confirms, brings with it some very awful consequences, which men would sometimes very willingly evade; if God be in His nature unchangeable, then in some sense His wrath must be as unchangeable as His love, and we may be compelled to admit that *they* have as little ground to rest upon in reason as they have in Scripture, who imagine a time when the punishment of sin shall have ceased; but, while I would quite admit the terrible character of some of the conclusions, which arise from the putting together of what we can observe of God's dealings with what we are constrained to believe concerning the absence of all change from His nature, I would ever have you to bear in mind that the infinite and unchanging *love* of God is the

most glorious result of the principle of His immutability, that which has been most illustrated in His conduct, and that which most concerns us to dwell upon as the ground of our duty towards Him. The whole character of God's acts is to be interpreted by that one principal act, namely, the sending His Son into the world to redeem it; He who thus loved the world changeth not; He who thus stooped to our wretchedness is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; He who in an unspeakable manner declared His pity towards our fallen race, and His sympathy with human suffering, when Jesus Christ went about doing good and healing sickness and setting men free from the bondage of the devil, is evermore actuated by the same feelings towards us, ever loves us as He did when He created us in His own image, ever works amongst us by His Holy Spirit.

And *therefore* we are to put our whole trust in Him; privilege, or duty, which is it most? The Church Catechism rightly says, "to put my *whole* trust in Him"—if what I have said be true, there can be no reserve in the absolute confidence, which we are bound to put, at all times and in all places, in the love of God towards us. One word of proof would be superfluous; I shall therefore pass on to make two remarks, in illustration of what I said some short time back,

namely, that the duty of trusting in God was not so easy to perform as we might imagine, and that the privilege of trusting in Him might be without much difficulty abused; and with these two remarks I shall conclude what I have to say concerning the putting our trust in God.

You will remember, that in speaking last Sunday of the duty of giving God thanks, I took occasion, from S. Paul's charge to the Ephesian Christians to "give thanks *always*," to remind you, that, as Christians, we are bound to give thanks, not only when the sun shines, but when our prospects are most gloomy. And, in like manner, I would remark concerning the duty of putting our trust in God, that the words of the Church Catechism express the true character of the duty, if by the expression, "put my *whole* trust in Him," we understand the assertion of the duty of putting our trust in God at all times and under all circumstances. I do not mean that this is the whole intention of the expression; doubtless it expresses, that, if God is trusted in at all, He must be the only person trusted in,—that we may not trust in ourselves, not in our health and strength and steadiness of character, nor in any one of those things, in which there is the greatest temptation to human nature to glory; doubtless it expresses all this, and it is manifest

that no less can be intended; God altogether or God not at all, must be the principle upon which our faith depends: but I remind you of another meaning, which the words may be intended to bear, because it gives me occasion to point out the side, upon which we are most likely to fail in the matter of trusting in God. As it is easy to give God thanks in prosperity, so it is easy in prosperity to imagine that we put our whole trust in Him; we may be easily trusting to ourselves, or to some earthly support and defense, while we imagine all the while we are trusting in God, as long as there is nothing to put us to the trial; but trial will shew, what the strength of our trust is, and where it is placed. Let a person, for instance, undergo some severe affliction, and see whether he is patient; let a young man be tried by the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and see whether he resists manfully as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; let a person be placed in circumstances, in which high principle is in one scale and worldly interest in the other, and see which preponderates; let a person be tried in fact in any one of those ways in which God tries us all, and then it will be seen, whether his whole trust is in God, or whether he has been deceiving himself, by imagining that he has a faith which in reality he has not.

The other remark, which I propose to make, is this. Persons not unfrequently deceive themselves, by mistaking an unbounded trust in God's mercy for that faith, which is spoken of in Scripture as saving the soul. It is not in books only that this confusion is made; if it were so, it would be of very small consequence; whether faith may properly be called trust is a question of small importance, so long as it is one of mere controversial divinity; but I have witnessed the confusion myself in the case of plain and half-educated people, and with them it is a practical error and one of great importance. The error consists in imagining, that there is a saving character in the mere unflinching belief that Christ's blood can wash away their sins; I have trembled sometimes to hear the earnestness, with which surviving friends have laid stress upon the mere fact of an expression of such belief; doubtless such belief is necessary, doubtless the putting our whole trust in God implies faith in the precious blood of Christ as the ransom for sin; but, if such belief is thought to do away with the need of repentance, or to be in any conceivable sense a substitute for holiness of life, who can estimate the amount of error which may be thus introduced? I cannot tell how often this error is made, nor how deep it usually goes, but certainly I think that it is

not unfrequently committed, and that much of our religion in England is more or less tinged, and I may say discoloured, by it. From all that I have said in this sermon, and on former occasions, you will not, I am sure, suspect me of wishing to limit the mercy and love of God, nor the efficacy of faith in Christ; but I solemnly declare my belief, that there *are* cases, in which men indulge themselves in a trust, to which they are not entitled; not entitled, because they leave other duties unperformed. They wish to trust, without having learned also to fear and love; and no man may thus break up the catalogue of duties; he, who does not perform the other duties, will be awfully, it may be even fatally, mistaken, if he fancies that he performs this.

# SERMON X.

## TO CALL UPON HIM.

PSALM xcix. 6.

Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among such as call upon His Name: these called upon the Lord, and He heard them.

IN this course of Sermons upon the summary of our duty towards God contained in the Church Catechism, I have said nothing of the manner in which the different points of duty may be supposed to be deduced from the Ten Commandments, or rather from the first four of them. The Church Catechism gives "duty towards God" as one of the two great lessons, which the Commandments teach; and this undoubtedly it is; and it may be supposed to be implied, that, in the opinion of those who composed the Catechism, each separate duty of those enumerated may be found contained in the Table of the Com-

mandments. It is of no great consequence that we should be able to perceive, how the truth of each individual duty can be thus deduced and proved; and this is the reason why I have not taken any trouble with the question, but have rather concerned myself with the duties themselves, as they stand out before us in the light of reason and of Scripture. Nevertheless it may be worth while to observe, that the duties of worshipping God, giving Him thanks, putting our whole trust in Him, and calling upon Him, are nowhere in the Table of Commandments explicitly declared. We are told,—or rather the Israelities were told, that they were to have no other God besides the Lord Jehovah, who had redeemed them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and that they were not to bow down to or worship graven images, nor the likeness of anything in heaven or in earth, because the Lord was a jealous God; but they were not told in this place, that they *were* to worship God; you will say, that this was implied, and so no doubt it was, but it was implied for this reason, that it was taken for granted that men would worship *something*, and therefore it was only necessary to forbid idolatry and all other false worship, in order to ensure the true. And this is worthy of your notice, because it calls to our minds the great truth of

the feeling of the necessity of worship and prayer being born with us, being part of our nature; there is no need of any law of God to say, when you are weak you shall call upon some one stronger than yourself, when you can find no help in your own resources you shall look above you for comfort,—there is no need of any law of God written on stone to say this, because it is written on the fleshy tables of man's heart; and it has been only in very rare cases (if in any) that Satan has been able to entirely deface this mark of the image and superscription, which prove that men are bound to pay tribute. The only danger is, lest men should call upon that which is weaker than themselves, lest they should bow themselves down to an image instead of raising their hearts and voices up to God; and the commandments of God are sufficient to ensure worship and allegiance to Himself, if they only prevent men from bowing themselves down to things which are not God. And hence also I would have you to perceive, that it is easy to clear the laws of God from the charge of laying upon men's shoulders a burden too heavy to be borne; they lay no burden upon men's shoulders; they only say, you shall bear a burden (if burden it is to be called) for a worthy master, and not for an unworthy one; you will certainly put your trust in something,

you will be sure to call out for help when you are in trouble, you will be sure to fear something though perhaps not to love anything,—well, then put your trust in and learn to call upon the great God who made you and redeemed you, fear *Him*, and love *Him;* for this is the difference between Him and any god which you can devise for yourselves, that you can love Him as well as fear Him, and that in serving Him you will find perfect freedom. Away then with the notion that religion is really the laying of fetters upon men's liberty. It is the destruction of the fetters with which men would bind themselves, and the exhibition of Him, who can be obeyed in perfect freedom, and in whom duty and privilege are entirely at one.

A remark may be made concerning the fourth commandment, similar to that which I have just made concerning the first and second. The duty of worshipping God and calling upon Him may be supposed to be partly involved in the duty of keeping holy the Sabbath-day; certainly so far as the Christian Lord's day represents the Jewish sabbath, we regard this as the chief duty connected with the command to keep it holy; we regard it specially as a day of public worship, a day upon which men are to rest from their ordinary labours, not only that they may refresh

their bodies with repose, but that they may gain also spiritual strength by more solemn service than usual, and by joining with their brethren in common prayer and praise. You may well imagine that this was all contemplated in the command given from mount Sinai to keep the Sabbath-day holy; and all the regulations afterwards given for the worship of God tend to shew that this was the case; but I wish you to observe, that in the commandment itself the thing is nowhere expressed, the day is appointed to be kept holy, it is to be a day of rest, and the very remarkable reason is given that God Himself had rested on the seventh day, and yet there is nothing said of public worship and solemn service. And the reason would probably be much the same as in the case of the first and second commandments; if a day were kept holy to the Lord, worship need hardly be enjoined for that day; it could not be kept holy without; a day given up entirely to human pleasure and mere cessation from work might be a *holiday* to man, but could not be called a *holy day* to the Lord; therefore the mode of employing the day may be said to have been taken for granted, and it was left to subsequent regulations to arrange the details of the worship and service of the Sabbath.

Thus much then concerning the manner in

which the duty towards God, which is developed in the Church Catechism, may be supposed to be contained in the Commandments, upon which the summary of duty professes to be founded. I have introduced these remarks to-day, because they seem to apply to the duty of *calling upon God* more fully than they do to several others; and I now proceed to discuss what is meant by the expression in the Church Catechism "to call upon Him," and to distinguish between its meaning and that of some other duties, which we have already considered.

Now I have taken my text from the Psalms, because the expression *calling upon God* is one of not unfrequent occurrence in them, and because the whole spirit of the Book of Psalms appears to illustrate admirably well the meaning and force of the phrase. And before I examine the way in which the expression is used in the text, I will produce several other passages from the Psalms, in which the same expression is used, and which we shall presently find useful.

In Psalm iv. 1, 2, 3, we read as follows: "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble; have mercy upon me, and hearken unto my prayer. O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme mine honour, and have such pleasure in vanity, and

seek after leasing? Know this also, that the Lord hath chosen to Himself the man that is godly: when I call upon the Lord, He will hear me." The spirit of these verses, (and the same spirit runs through the whole of the Psalms,) is that of a man confident that he has in his distress a friend to whom he can appeal,—one who will plead his cause and deliver him, whenever he is driven by the cruelty of his enemies, and the troubles in which he finds himself, to look to some one stronger than himself for support. You will find the same kind of calling upon God described in Psalm cii. 1, 2: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto Thee. Hide not Thy face from me in the time of my trouble: incline Thine ear unto me when I call; O hear me and that right soon." This instance differs from the former one in this point, that in the former case it was the cruelty of the children of men which drove the Psalmist to God in his distress, in this case it is rather the heavy hand of God which is the mainspring of his grief; for although in the 8th verse of the Psalm he speaks of his enemies reviling him, still it is clear that this is intended to express, that they reviled him when they perceived him to be afflicted by God; for he adds immediately, "and that because of Thine indignation and wrath; for Thou hast

taken me up and cast me down." Thus the two cases differ in this, that in the one the affliction under the pressure of which the Psalm was composed arises from the cruelty of man, in the other it arises from the chastening hand of God; but the two agree in this, and it is this which I wish you to remark, namely, that in both cases the cry spoken of is a cry of *affliction*,—it is a calling upon God in *trouble*,—it is a falling back upon Him, as a sure friend and unchanging protector, when all earthly friends and human protectors appear to fail.

The same thing may be said of many other passages; as for instance Psalm lxxxvi. 7: "In the time of my trouble I will call upon Thee, for Thou hearest me:" or again Psalm lxxxviii. 1, (the Psalm which we use on Good Friday, as expressive of the feelings of the Lord Jesus Himself, when in His great affliction): "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee: O let my prayer enter into Thy presence, incline Thine ear unto my calling." But then, on the other hand, there are passages of a rather different complexion from those which I have hitherto quoted; thus if you will look to Psalm cxlv. you will find that it is a Psalm written apparently under no pressure of distress; contrariwise it is one breathing very much of the

spirit of joy and praise; it commences thus, "I will magnify Thee, O God my king, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever," and it continues much in the same strain. Now in the 18th verse of this Psalm we read, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, yea all such as call upon Him faithfully;" in which passage therefore I should suppose, that calling upon God is intended to express that habitual prayer to God and communion with God, which constitute the main support of the spiritual life of man; and I think that we shall give the full and proper meaning to the phrase "calling upon Him," considered as expressing one of our duties towards God, if we take it in both of the significations which it bears in the Book of Psalms, that is, if we regard it as expressing that dependence upon God in trouble and distress, which Christians have a right to feel, and which they can only express by earnest cries and supplications, and that quiet and constant communion with God in prayer, which belongs to the ordinary everyday life of the Christian soul, and without which that life cannot be supported.

The words, which I have chosen for a text, seem in a certain way to combine in one these two views of the meaning of calling upon God. The text enumerates Moses and Aaron as among God's

priests, and Samuel as among such as call upon His Name; "these," says the Psalmist, "called upon the Lord, and He heard them." Now undoubtedly the persons here named, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, may be taken as examples of men, who have been exposed to extraordinary trials, and who in their trouble called to the Lord for help. The wonders and signs, which were shewn in Egypt by the hand of Moses and Aaron, would at once rise up in the mind of any Hebrew who sang this Psalm; there are other Psalms, in which a more distinct enumeration of their deeds is made, but the allusion in the verse after the text, "He spake unto them out of the cloudy pillar," or even the very mention of their names, would be enough to bring to the minds of the people who heard this Psalm, or who joined in chanting it, the manner in which the prayers of these righteous men had availed much at some of the most critical points of the history of their nation. So likewise, the allusion to Samuel would bring to mind similar points of history, and especially perhaps would be deemed to refer to that occasion, upon which Samuel brought to the minds of the people their wickedness in desiring a king, and upon which he said to them[1], "I will call unto the Lord"—the very words of

1 Samuel xii. 17.

the text you will observe—"I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king;" and then we read that "Samuel called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel." I say then that the words of the text would be easily understood by those, for whose use the Psalm was written, if they applied the expression "calling upon the Lord" to those more unusual and remarkable callings upon God, in which God has sometimes given signal proof of His having heard prayer, as a kind of encouragement to men in all times to lift up their voices to Him in their distress. But this is not the whole of the meaning to be assigned to the words of the text; and in order that we may see the whole force of it more clearly, let me call your attention to the first part of it, in which Moses and Aaron are spoken of as "among His *priests;*" now, strictly speaking, you will remember that this was not so; Aaron was a priest, but Moses was not; when therefore Moses and Aaron are both spoken of as being of the number of God's priests, we must understand the term in that more general sense, in which (for instance) Christians are spoken of

as being priests: you will remember the words of S. Peter, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal *priesthood*, an holy nation, a peculiar people[1]:" and then Moses and Aaron will be spoken of as priests, in the sense of their being in continual ministering attendance upon God, habitual waiting upon Him. For this you will remember ever was and ever must be the character of priesthood; it is a ministering to God, and that not occasionally, but as the habit and practice of the life; hence priesthood is regarded as indelible; the Jewish priests were priests from their birth, they were priests because they were Aaron's seed; the Christian priesthood is regarded as a bond, which once taken may never be loosened; and the priesthood of all righteous men depends for its reality upon their constant service to God, and offering up to Him of their prayers, and ministering to Him of their substance, all the days of their life. Moses and Aaron might therefore well be described as priests of God, though only one of them was so in the strict sense of the word; but a further light is thrown upon the name, when you take it as in connexion with the description given of Samuel in the next portion of the verse: for it is a well-known law of Scripture poetry, and you must

[1] 1 Peter ii. 9.

have often noticed it yourselves, that the verses are frequently constructed in such a manner, as that one part to a considerable extent repeats in a varied form that which goes before it; and thus as Moses and Aaron are spoken of as priests, so Samuel is spoken of as one who called upon God's name; and we may probably conclude, that there is no very wide difference of meaning between the description given of Moses and Aaron, and that given of Samuel. If then we look to Samuel, we shall easily perceive, that he stands out preeminently as an example of men, who have called upon the name of God, and who in such sense may be reckoned as amongst His priests; Samuel was indeed in a very peculiar sense of the word a priest of God, as having been devoted to the service of God in Shiloh from his mother's womb; but he was a priest in a higher sense still, for he was not only devoted by his mother to the public ministry of God's house, but he truly ministered unto God from his childhood with the most earnest devotion and entire service of the heart. And because we know of Samuel, that he did thus call upon the Lord in his childhood, and that he grew up in the fear of God, and was able to serve Him with a consistency and steadiness which has been attained by very few others of the saints, therefore the verse, which quotes

him as emphatically one of those, who called on God's name, is most useful to me in endeavouring to impress upon you, that, although to call upon God may mean, and does frequently mean in Scripture, the crying to God in distress, yet it also and quite as really means that quiet and habitual waiting upon God in prayer, which forms the life of God's saints. Nor are the two things so much removed the one from the other as might appear; they are closely, vitally connected, as the example in the text may serve very well to shew: Samuel was able, no doubt, upon a great and critical occasion to call upon God, and to produce a sign from heaven by his prayer; so were Moses and Aaron in their days;—but how was this? what was the secret of the mighty energy of these men? why were their prayers in trouble and upon extraordinary occasions heard and answered? it was because they called upon God also on *ordinary* occasions, and when they were *not* pressed by *trouble;* this was the secret of their power, that they were dealing with an instrument with which they were familiar, they were only making use in public, and before multitudes, of that, which they had often tested in private, and in the presence of God alone. I lay great stress upon this, because it is most necessary that we should have true views concerning this duty of calling upon

God; I have pointed out to you that in the Book of Psalms,—that divine and wonderful manual of devotions,—the calling upon God, of which we read so frequently, does often imply the calling out in distress of one, who is oppressed by man, or else afflicted by the chastening hand of God; and the Book of Psalms may therefore be our warrant for doing the like; we may with justice call out in our trouble, when we do so upon such an example; but what is it that justifies such a mode of calling upon God in the Psalms? just this—that it is not the only mode of calling upon God of which the example is given; a man may only with justice call upon God in adversity, if he has also called upon Him in prosperity; if a man has never cried out unto God until he cries in distress, what virtue is there likely to be in such a cry? is it likely to be the cry of faith or of terror? the voice of one who believes himself the heir of heaven, or of him who trembles at the thought of hell? It is not for me to say, what cries will be heard and what will not; there was one, we know, whose prayer was heard and granted, though it was that of a malefactor dying upon a cross; but then again, we know that some men will say "Lord, Lord," to whom the gate of mercy will not be opened; and the wisdom of God, when she cries in the street and is unheard,

will not answer when those who despised her cry to her in their turn. But, as I have said, I have nothing to do with deciding what calling on God is heard, and what is not; yet this I may do, and am bound to do, namely, to point out that course which Christians ought to pursue, if they would ensure themselves against calling to God some day in vain. And all that need be said upon such a point goes into a very small compass. The Church Catechism teaches the child,—the *child* observe, the child with all its health and youth to depend upon, and all its life lying before it, and all the temptations and pleasures of the world just breaking upon it,—teaches the *child* to say, "*my* duty towards God is to call upon Him"; and this is the true view of the duty, or of the privilege, (for, as I said to you last Sunday, it is difficult to distinguish one from the other,) and the child who learns this lesson and practises it becomes the man after God's own heart. He who thus ministers to God as a child, and makes the continual calling upon God part of his daily life, prayer his daily food, thus constantly exercising his priesthood as one appointed to offer up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to his Father in heaven,—he, and only he, has a right to look forward to that sense of God's protection and presence, which will enable him at all times to

lean upon God in entire confidence, to call upon Him and feel sure that God will hear. I do not say, that no other prayers are answered; I do not say, that you may not neglect God's service for a time, and at length repent and see your folly and amend; I do not say, that the cry wrung from a man by the fear of death and of judgment may not be the first step to an habitual calling upon God; but I do say, that to depend upon such a hope of salvation as this, is to peril our souls; and not only so, but that it is also in the most signal manner to insult the majesty, and to abuse the mercy of God.

Look to the verse following the text, and then you will see who those are whom God answers. "They kept His testimonies, and the law that He gave them." Go, and do likewise, Christian Brethren; and so will God answer you, for Jesus Christ's sake, even as He answered them.

# SERMON XI.

## HONOUR OF GOD'S NAME AND WORD.

PSALM XXXVIII. 2.

I will worship toward Thy holy temple, and praise Thy Name, because of Thy lovingkindness and truth: for Thou hast magnified Thy Name, and Thy Word above all things.

THIS verse, as I have quoted it from the Prayer-book version of the Psalms, contains the mention of those two great things which will come under our notice to-day, the *Name* and the *Word* of God. "It is my duty," says the child in the Church Catechism, "to honour His Holy Name and His Word;" and this duty of man very well corresponds with that, which is described in the text as the conduct of Almighty God; "Thou," says the Psalmist, "hast magnified Thy Name and Thy Word above all things." And if it be thus according to the good will and pleasure of God to magnify, or render illustrious and honourable, His Name and Word, it cannot be less than a duty

on the part of man to honour and reverence the same.

But in using the words of the text in this way, I think it right to remind you, that the Bible version, which is the more accurate translation of the original, gives the passage a different turn. According to the Bible version the passage runs thus, "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name;" the meaning of which would seem to be, "Thou hast done for me more than Thou hadst promised;" it is an expression of overflowing gratitude to Him, who is "wont to do more than either we desire or deserve," and is assigned as a reason, why the Psalmist was minded "to worship towards God's holy Temple, and to praise His Name for His lovingkindness and for His truth." This mode of translating the passage being more accurate than that which I have read from the Prayer-book, I should clearly have no right to make use of the Prayer-book version as a ground upon which to build, or as an argument by which to support, any peculiar religious doctrine; but in truth I am not intending so to use the words; I quote them chiefly because they afford an instance of the natural and easy way (so to speak) in which the Name and the Word of God fit in one with the other, so as to form one subject. And the reason of this is upon consideration very evident;

for the Name of God represents to us the Being and Character and Attributes of God; when God revealed Himself to His ancient Church, He is said to have revealed to them His *Name;* it was one of the first questions which Moses asked, when God appeared to him in the Bush and desired him to go to the Israelites as His messenger, "When they say, what is the *Name* of the God of our fathers, what shall I tell them? And God said unto him, I AM THAT I AM; thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you ..... This is My *Name* for ever and My memorial unto all generations:"[1] and so when our Lord prayed that God might be glorified, He said, "Father, glorify Thy *Name*," even as He had taught His disciples to pray daily to their Father in heaven, that His *Name* might be hallowed. I say then, that the Name of God should not represent to our minds a *mere* name, but should bring before our thoughts the Person, the Being, the Character, the Attributes of Him, to whom the Name belongs. This is a very obvious point, and I merely remind you of it; now observe how this view of the Name brings it at once into connexion with the Word of God; for what is the Word of God, but the expression of the mind and will of

[1] Exodus iii. 14, 15.

God? that which God speaks, in whatever manner He may speak it, reveals to us His will, and is in fact the only medium, through which we can become acquainted with the Person, the Being, the Character, the Attributes of Him, whom eye hath not seen. The *Word* of God may therefore be said to declare to us the *Name* of God; we did not know God's Name until He Himself told it to us; and if that Name has been declared to us in the most clear and intelligible manner by the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, then we are to remember, that the most exalted title of Jesus Christ is that of "the Word of God."

I now proceed to make some remarks upon the duty of honouring God's Name and His Word, as it is brought before us in the Church Catechism. I remarked to you in my last sermon, that it might perhaps be not obvious how each of the duties, enumerated in the general summary of duty towards God, could be deduced from the first four commandments of the Decalogue, upon which the summary professes to be based; but with reference to that duty, upon which I have to speak to you at this time, there can be no difficulty, for it can scarcely be doubted that the duty of honouring God's Name is intended to be that, which is enjoined by the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord Thy God in

vain, for the Lord will not hold Him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain;" and seeing that we have thus among the Ten Commandments one, which is especially devoted to the injunction of the duty of honouring God's Name, I think that I shall do well to take this commandment, as the basis of what I have to say to you concerning the duty.

The expression used in the commandment "to take the Name of the Lord God in vain" has, as many of you are probably aware, a peculiar meaning. It means to swear falsely by the Name of God,—to call God as the witness to a lie,—to make use of His Name in order to give weight to what we assert, the assertion being at the time false, or else falsified by our subsequent conduct. To swear falsely in this manner must clearly be both hateful in itself as a sin against God, and most destructive of the good order and peace of society; truthfulness is health to a nation, falsehood is pestilence and death; hence we are not surprised to find a law against false swearing in a table of Commandments, which were given to an infant people like that of the Israelites. Perjury (as you know) is equally a sin in the eye of our own law; the law of man in this case echoes, for the benefit of man, the voice of God's law, which is based upon still higher grounds; God will not hold

the perjurer guiltless, neither will the law of our land do the same; the very safety of society requires this, that the perjurer should be punished. But it is manifest, that the spirit of the Third Commandment extends beyond the prevention of false swearing, and also that if we do not follow it out into its more extended meaning, we shall gain (comparatively speaking) very little by the consideration of it. For no one here can need to be warned against perjury; a man must be very far gone in vice, and is very unlikely to be found in a church, who would not be horrified at the thought of false swearing. I do not mean to say, that all of us are likely to be thoroughly truthful persons; I believe on the other hand, that there is a vast amount of deceit, and want of openness and straightforwardness, (which is much the same thing), current amongst persons calling themselves Christians and who habitually confess their sins in church; and I think that I should not be wasting time in discussing such defect of truthfulness and honesty; but to do so would lead me to speak more of duty towards our neighbour than of duty towards God, and moreover would lead me away from the subject, which I desire especially to dwell upon at this time. I shall take the Third Commandment therefore, and deal with it, not so much with reference to its bearing upon truthfulness, as with reference

to the manner in which it illustrates the reverence due to the Name of God. "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord Thy God in vain"—such is the commandment, and it declares the wickedness and danger of false swearing, and of course in its degree of all kinds of lying and deceit; but it does more than this; it leads us to think that there must be something very awful in the nature of that Name, which may not be connected with a lie, and to consider whether there may not be other modes of sinning against the same Name,—taking it in vain,—setting it at nought,—causing others to blaspheme it.

And if we consider why it is, that to swear falsely by the Name of God is so great a sin, we shall not only be easily able to answer the question, but also we shall be able to conclude, that the curse pronounced in the commandment is not unreasonably taken in general as extended to such sins of profanity, as are commonly described by the phrase "taking God's Name in vain." For I suppose that to swear by the Name of God is to call God as a witness of the truth of what we assert, to acknowledge His presence and His power, and acknowledging these to say, "God who knows all things knows that what I assert is true." Now, this being the meaning of an oath, how are we to regard false swearing?

it seems to me, that a man who forswears himself either shews his disbelief in God's knowledge and power, or else he thinks that God cares neither for good or evil, that He will take no notice; and if the very fact of swearing by God's Name be proof that the person who swears does not actually disbelieve in Him, then it remains that to swear falsely is to mock at God, to treat Him not as the judge of all the earth and as One of eyes too pure to look upon sin without wrath, but as a mere careless gazer upon the affairs of this earth, and by so treating Him to insult Him in the manner of all others most offensive. If then the sin involved in the breach of the third commandment, so far as God is concerned, consists in the mockery and insult which it involves, then any other sin, which involves the same kind of mockery and insult, may be regarded as a kindred sin and forbidden by the same law.

For instance; it would seem that any person, who had a right perception of the greatness and glory of God and the sin of mocking Him, would abstain altogether from swearing by His name in common matters. If the sense of God's presence would lead us to attach a peculiar sanctity to an assertion, made with an appeal to Him concerning the truth of what we say, then the same principle would lead us to shrink entirely from introducing

His Name into ordinary talk and common assertions. And we see in fact, that this was the manner in which our blessed Lord interpreted the third commandment; the Jewish doctors, narrowing the meaning of God's laws, as was their wont, until the letter only remained and the spirit had been evaporated, interpreted the commandment thus; they concluded, that, because it was a great sin to swear falsely by the Name of God, therefore it was well to evade the danger by swearing by something else, as by the Temple, or by Heaven, or by their own heads; and so they fell into curious discussion concerning the binding character of different oaths. A man might swear by the Altar and be guiltless; but if he swore by the offering upon it he was bound by his oath. But what saith Christ? "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."[1] You will

[1] S. Matthew v. 33—37.

perceive, how that it is the reverence due to the Name and power of God, which is the foundation of our Lord's commentary upon the third commandment; those very reasons which would be produced, to explain why Heaven, or Earth, or Jerusalem might be used as the ground of an oath, would be to our Lord's mind the very reason why they ought not so to be used; a person would not swear by anything unless he deemed it sacred; and if he did deem it sacred, then that would be the very best reason for not swearing by it; and it was the Name of God, which directly or indirectly gave to all sacred things that sacredness which belonged to them, and therefore reverence for His Name would require that even these inferior things, which did but reflect a few rays of His own essential brightness, should not be treated lightly for fear of insulting Him. Some Christians have interpreted our Lord's words, as though they forbad the taking of an oath on solemn occasions for solemn purposes; I shall not do more than say, that the general interpretation assigned by the Church has been different, and that in fact the solemn asseveration of a Quaker differs from that which other Christians call an oath more in form than in reality. But however this may be, what I wish you particularly to notice is this, that our Lord Jesus Christ saw in the third command-

ment, not a rule for determining what oaths were binding and what not, but a broad precept to reverence God's Holy Name; and He declared that the true binding form of promise from one Christian to another should be a simple Yes, or a simple No. Each Christian was bound to have ever in his mind the presence of God, and the necessity of saying and doing all as under His eye; and therefore to appeal to Him, or to swear by any of those things which reflected His glory, would be to imply that our general life and conversation were not witnessed by Him.

I am far from thinking, that the full spirit of the Lord's precept, "Let your communication be Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay," has been yet exhibited generally in the world; I fear (as I have already said) hat there is, even amongst professing Christians, much of crookedness and dishonesty; nevertheless, considering the great natural proneness of mankind to lying, a proneness of which we have the most abundant and convincing proof, I do think that the amount of truthfulness which has resulted from the spirit of Christ influencing His disciples, is very wonderful. And as an illustration of our Lord's precept concerning Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay, I note especially, that we Christians do in fact attribute more force to simple assertion, than to appeals to Heaven or to God; if, in our

ordinary converse with mankind, we find that a person is very frequently appealing to God that he speaks the truth, do we on that account feel sure that there can be no falsehood in the man? the very contrary conclusion we know to be the one usually drawn; and so it is remarkable, that the view which Christ has given us of the Name of God, representing it to us as too solemn to be used in support of a Christian's word, has had the effect of giving to a Christian's word a strength, which is not increased, but rather diminished by an oath.

Of course that reverence for God's Name, which forbids us to use it to enforce an assertion, still more forbids us to use it as a mere exclamation, or as giving point to a remark or to a joke. When the Church Catechism teaches the child to say "It is my duty to honour God's Name," doubtless it is intended that the child should understand, that all light treatment of that Holy Name in whatever way is forbidden; and this is not a mere child's lesson, not a childish thing which may be put away when we come to man's estate, rather is it a lesson to be learned in childhood, because, like most of the lessons which bear upon our practical life, it cannot be learned well unless it be learned then. To speak our mother-tongue, to read it, to write it correctly,—all these

and the like accomplishments, which are of daily and hourly use, must be acquired in childhood; and in like manner, to reverence the Name of God so as it should be reverenced, to acquire the habit of so regarding it that to take it in vain shall seem abhorrent from all our tastes, a sin impossible to be committed by us even in haste or under the effect of irritation,—this kind of reverential feeling must be begun in childhood, in order that it may grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. Nor is the sin of taking God's Name in vain, regarded in this way, one for which we can be disposed to make much allowance; it is not one of those, which human frailty and the strength of natural lusts and passions would lead us to regard with comparative leniency; when God says, that He will not hold offenders in this sort guiltless, we feel that the condemnation is reasonable,—why *should* God hold them guiltless? what excuse is there, what provocation, what explanation? For in truth that habit of using God's Name irreverently, which is not uncommon and of which I am now speaking, is one at which we might be disposed to smile, if it were not for the manifest profanity of it; the act is so unnecessary, it yields no comfort, it involves no cleverness, it manifests no wit, it does not even satisfy any lust or appetite; it stands out before us as a pure and

unmitigated and most foolish offense against the Majesty of Almighty God; and though it is not for me to discriminate between the punishment due to one sin and that due to another, nor between the comparative hatefulness of different sins in the eye of God, yet this I think we may certainly say, that of all breaches of the commandments, that of the third admits of the least excuse.

I may further observe, that the best preservative against the taking of God's Name in vain, is to endeavour ourselves, and to teach our children, in all ways, to pay it positive honour and respect. The ancient habit of bowing the head at the Name of the Lord Jesus is an example of the manner, in which, by an external reverence, we may continually remind both ourselves and others of the reverence due to Him to whom the Name belongs; and so I think that the Name of God should always, both by old and young, be mentioned quietly and devoutly, and that an effort should be made, every time the Name passes our lips, to remember who God is, and that we are in His presence. The habit of honouring God's Name, when once acquired, is not easily lost; and I believe that there are persons, who, having been taught by their mothers to pronounce God's Name reverently, have found in the habit thus acquired in childhood the true basis of their religious fear

of God in after years, and the source of a spiritual strength which the contact of an evil world has not been able to destroy.

I have already remarked upon the near relation of the Name and the Word of God; and so it is easy to pass from the honouring of His Name to the honouring His Word. His Name may represent to us what God is; His Word represents to us what He says or what He does. And it is manifest, that he who reverences the Name, the Being, the Person of God, who recognises God's greatness and has an abiding sense of God's presence, will certainly regard with the most lively devotion whatever issues from His mouth, or expresses His will. Whether it was the intention of those who compiled the Church Catechism, to refer by the expression *the Word of God* to the volume of Holy Scripture, I cannot certainly say; if it were, there can be no doubt that the duty of honouring that book, endeavouring to understand its meaning and to obey its precepts, is a very principal duty of every man to whom the book is given; without curiously discussing in what sense it is peculiarly described as God's Word, it is enough for us, that it is the chief record that we have of God's dealings with mankind, and specially of His great revelation to us in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ; and as such we do

well to speak of it as God's Word, and to apply to it such phrases as those which the Psalmist uses, when he speaks of the Word of God being "a light to the feet and a lantern to the paths." But in whatever way we take the expression, it is clear that every argument, which tends to prove that we are bound to honour God's Name, will equally shew that honour is due to His Word, simply because it *is* His.

We have here, Christian Brethren, a subject which would supply us with abundance of material for consideration, if I were now commencing my sermon instead of drawing near to its conclusion; for the reverence due to the Word of God would prove to be quite as fruitful a theme, as the reverence due to His Name. But I must be content to leave the subject confessedly incomplete, having given you what I believe to be the principles of it, and leaving you to follow out these principles. There is only one example, which I will take in conclusion, of the duty which I have been endeavouring to enforce; and I take it, partly because it shews admirably well how reverence to the Name of God and reverence to His Word naturally go together, and partly because it is the example which is most nearly connected with that common Christian worship, which brings us together here. I say then, that the duty of honouring God's Name

and His Word is broken in both its branches by any one, who attends God's house from any unworthy motive, or who behaves irreverently while there. This church, like all other churches, is a place for the honouring and worshipping of God's Name, for the reading and preaching of His Word; he who comes for such purposes as these does honour to God, and brings a blessing upon his own soul; he who comes for any other purpose, whether it be one of carelessness and frivolity, or whatever it be, insults Almighty God, and gives the devil a fearful advantage over Him; yea, indeed, Christian Brethren, any one who behaves himself irreverently in this church does take God's Name and His Word in vain, and God will not hold him guiltless.

# SERMON XII.

## TO SERVE HIM TRULY ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE.

EXODUS viii. 1.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

IT was not once only, but several times, that Moses was commissioned by God to carry this message to Pharaoh. In fact it was the very burden of all the messages; sometimes they were couched in precisely the same words, sometimes they were accompanied by threats, but the burden of all that Moses had to say to Pharaoh on the part of God was this, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me." God, you will observe, claimed the people as His; they were His chosen inheritance, and Pharaoh was holding in bondage those who by no right were his slaves; God said, They are Mine, and He vindicated His title to them as you very well know, shewing signs and wonders upon Pha-

raoh, and at length compelling him by terror to do that, which he refused to do from a sense of duty.

Now in order that I may be able to make that use of the words of God in the text which I propose to make, let me call your attention to one point in it, which might perhaps have escaped particular notice. The summons to Pharaoh is this, "Let My people go, that they may *serve* Me"—that they may *serve* Me,—not, you will observe, that they may be *at liberty*, but only that they may change their Master; it would perhaps have seemed to us more natural, that when the children of Israel were oppressed by an unrighteous king and heavy taskmasters, the summons should have come from God to set them free; "Thus saith the Lord, Set My people free," would perhaps have seemed to us the most fitting message to have been conveyed by Moses to Pharaoh; and in one sense of course the actual message sent was equivalent to this, Pharaoh *was* commanded to let them go, the grinding slavery of Egypt was to cease, the children of Israel were to become a nation, with ordinances and laws and institutions of their own, instead of being a mere rabble of bondsmen; and to be thus delivered by God, who is represented as coming down from Heaven having heard their cry, ought to have been deemed by those delivered as in the highest sense of the words perfect free-

dom; but still, perfect freedom is not the thing demanded of Pharaoh, nor is this the prize of their high calling held out before the eyes of the Israelites. No—to serve God is the perfect freedom held out; to change masters, to be rid of him who had no claim to their allegiance, and to be permitted without hinderance to serve Him who was indeed their Lord and their God—this was the boon offered to the children of Israel, and demanded on their account by Moses as the ambassador of God.

You will remember also, that the reason given to Pharaoh why he should let the Israelites go, namely, that they might serve God, was illustrated by their after history, when they were set free from Egypt. They *were* called upon to serve; nor was it a nominal service; on the other hand, it was a service against which the people kicked and struggled quite as earnestly, or rather I should say much more earnestly, than ever they had against the yoke of Pharaoh; for, strange though it may seem, the people do not seem, while under Pharaoh's yoke, to have shewn that spirit of rebellion, that difficulty in being governed, which was exhibited so strikingly afterwards; it would seem as though their spirit had been broken by slavery, and they contented themselves with groaning under labours; and the fleshpots of Egypt, the

abundance of the supply of mere animal wants, seem in a measure to have made up to them—so degraded had they become—for the want of personal freedom. You may see this illustrated by that story, which we have of Moses interfering in a quarrel between two of the Israelites; he would have set them at one again, but they only taunted him with having slain an Egyptian the day before in defense of one his countrymen;—no appearance of any readiness to join with Moses for resistance against the oppressors; only the quiet submission to a yoke, lest perchance that yoke should be made more intolerable. But look at this people, when the yoke of Pharaoh had been broken and they were privileged to serve God; no easy submission now; every reverse is a signal for rebellion; they even taunt Moses with having set them free, and they hanker after the good things of Egypt, with which their wretched carcases had been fed in the days of their slavery, and they who seem not to have kicked against Pharaoh, do kick continually against God. They are redeemed (as it were) in spite of themselves; they are compelled to enjoy the privilege of serving God.

This feature in the deliverance of the Israelites from the house of their bondage in Egypt is worthy of especial notice, when we regard it as typical of the deliverance from sin and the bond-

age of the devil, which our Heavenly Father is willing to effect for each one of us. The summons in the text, sent by the mouth of Moses to Pharaoh, "Let My people go that they may serve Me," may be properly regarded as identical with that, which God issues, on behalf of all His redeemed children, to those lusts and passions and sins, which hold them in bondage. The children are God's children, and therefore He has every right to claim them; but what I wish you to observe is, that the phrase which I have noted as peculiarly emphatic in the text—"Let My people go that they may *serve* Me"—is quite as emphatic in the case of the summons, supposed to be sent by God to those who now hold His children in bondage;—let them go, not that they may be free from a master, but that they may *serve*,—let them go, because they have been redeemed by Christ, and are not their own but His,—let them go, that, having been emancipated from the world the flesh and the devil, they may find their true liberty in giving themselves up body soul and spirit to do the will of Him, who loved them and gave Himself for them. That this is the very spirit of the New Testament, I need hardly assure you: it is difficult to say upon which point the more stress is laid, whether upon the perfect freedom which has been gained for us through Christ, or upon the

perfect obedience, which is due from us just because we have been made free. I will call your attention to one striking passage, which will exhibit this point to your minds as clearly as if I were to quote a hundred. The passage is in Romans, vi. 20, 21, 22; S. Paul is contrasting the condition of men as heathen, and living such lives as heathens usually led, with their condition as baptized members of Christ, and he says, "When ye were the servants of sin," or rather the slaves of sin, "ye were free from righteousness: what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God"—*free from sin* observe, corresponding to the words of the text, "Let My people go," and become *servants or slaves to God*, corresponding to the words of the text, "that they may serve Me"—"ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Nothing can put in a clearer light than does this passage the point which I wish to press, namely, that the deliverance from sin, which God works for His people, is in fact a change from one service to another,—a change from service to sin, which is perfect bondage, to service to God, which is perfect freedom.

The blessedness of this change of service is not esteemed as it ought to be; and that is why I

called your attention to the fact, that the Israelites kicked more against the service of God than ever they did against the service of Pharaoh. They could see little good which they had got by the change, they had lost the pleasures of Egypt, and they did not rightly value the privileges of the Tabernacle; and so it frequently is seen amongst ourselves, that the service of God is looked upon as intolerable bondage, when the service of sin seems scarcely felt as a burden, and Satan has so enslaved men's hearts, so lowered the high tone of mind which they ought to possess, as men standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, that they even prefer the service of sin, whose wages is death, to that glorious liberty of serving God, the end of which is peace and eternal life. And thus I say, that the blessedness of the service of God is not estimated as it ought to be; men in these days are too like the children of Israel in the wilderness, who seemed to think that they had conferred a favour upon Moses by following his guidance, and that the least reverse or dissatisfaction with his guidance would be a sufficient excuse to justify them in going back again to Egypt. Poor wretched craven hearts we may think were theirs, when we read of the manner in which they ventured to put the enjoyment of the fleshpots of Egypt in comparison with the high

privilege of serving God as free men; but in reality there was nothing in their conduct more strange or more blameable, than there is in the conduct of men calling themselves Christians, who do not take the service of God upon them as the great work of their lives, and who do not perceive that in the earnest discharge of such service is the highest happiness, as well as their principal duty and most blessed privilege.

The remarks which I have now made, Christian Brethren, upon the service of God, which by His mercy in Christ we are called upon to assume, in exchange for the service of the world the flesh and the devil, which in Baptism we renounce, are intended to introduce that last article of the summary of duty towards God, with which we have been now for twelve Sundays engaged. The Church Catechism teaches the child to conclude the account of its duty towards God with this sentence, "and to serve Him truly all the days of my life"—a very comprehensive conclusion; and I may observe that as the summary of duty towards God began with *faith*, so it ends with *works;* as it commenced with belief in God and the state of the affections towards Him, so it ends with practice. And the beginning and end of it must go together; the beginning without the end would be hypocrisy, the end without the beginning would

be impossible. Now then let me make a few remarks upon the manner, in which the Church Catechism has expressed this concluding and most comprehensive portion of our duty towards God.

"To serve Him truly all the days of my life"—the first words of this sentence will not need much comment, because almost all that need be said about them is involved in what I have already spoken. To serve Him means to obey Him, and to obey Him means to keep His commandments; and what His commandments are, we know partly from our own conscience, partly from Scripture, partly from such teaching as God has provided for us from the mouths of parents and ministers. To serve God was doubtless that for which we were created; the ruin of man's happiness took place, when he disobeyed God and chose for Himself another master; and the blessedness of our condition as men redeemed in Christ is just this, that we are able to throw off the service which sin has imposed upon us, and return to God, and take His yoke upon us again. Thus it does not admit of a question, that to serve God is our duty,—our duty by creation, and still more our duty by redemption; and being our duty, it is (as I have said to you before) our privilege; and both the duty and the privilege are marked in the clearest manner by that first dedication of each child to

Christ, in which, having been received by God according to His promise, embraced with the arms of His mercy, assured of the inheritance of His kingdom, the child is marked with the sacred sign, in token that he is to be for ever the soldier and the servant of Christ. All this would be (I should suppose) admitted by all of us; and I shall say no more upon the duty and privilege of serving God just now; but I notice, that the Church Catechism has introduced a word, apparently with the intention of reminding us, that merely to admit this, merely to speak of it being right and reasonable to serve God is of no use, unless the thing itself be done earnestly and manfully. For the sentence in the Church Catechism runs thus, "to serve Him *truly;*" and I should suppose that serving Him *truly* is spoken of in order to exclude all empty pretence of service. There is, for instance, such a thing as *lip service;* our Lord rebuked some of the people of His own time for this; "Why call ye Me Lord Lord, and do not the things which I say?"—to call Christ Lord is to profess to serve Him, it is the same thing precisely, only in other words; but not to do things which He bids us is to make this profession a sham,—it is not to serve Him *truly*, but to serve Him falsely, hypocritically, that is, in fact not to serve Him at all. Now what I would wish to press upon you is this,

that if there be any reason or justice or privilege in serving God, the expression "to serve Him *truly*" is not too strong to convey to us a sense of our duty; even taking into consideration merely the end of serving God, I mean that crown of eternal life which is laid up in the world to come for those who have served God in this present world, it is clear that we cannot serve God too much or too earnestly; if it be true, that God has infinite treasures in store for those who serve Him, what *can* we do that it is too much? how can we be too earnest in the race, if this is the prize? how can we work too laboriously during the heat of the day, if when the evening comes the master of the vineyard has such wages for his labourers? I do not say that this is the strongest, the most effective argument for serving God; I do not think it is; but still it is an argument, which frees from any just accusation of enthusiasm or folly those, who do make the things of the life to come their chief concern, and the service of God their chief business in this life. Nor do I think that a practically effective argument can be drawn from that consideration, which nevertheless gives a sufficient ground for pressing the need of truly serving God, namely this, that God being infinite deserves an entire submission, that to measure out our service to Him, to refuse Him the best that we have, to

hold back from complete and unlimited obedience, is to deny Him to be God, to treat Him as one of ourselves, to deal with Him as with a creature—so much service against so much reward. Observe, I do not say that a good argument may not be made to depend upon this view of God's greatness, but I believe that it will ever be found to be one not so really influential as might have been expected upon the lives of men; it will I fear remain an argument to the head, but will lack influence upon the heart, and so will fail in bringing forth fruit. The real argument I imagine is this, that God has redeemed us from the service of sin by the sacrifice of His blessed Son. The child, who in the Church Catechism says, that it is its duty to serve God truly all the days of its life, has already stated that it has been made a member of Christ—*member of Christ?* what does that mean? how was the child made so? The whole picture of Christ's humiliation and suffering and death rises before us; it was through this divine condescension, this emptying of Himself on the part of the Eternal Son, that the child of wrath could be made a child of grace; this is the redemption from bondage, which has been effected for members of Christ by God's infinite mercy; and upon this love, shewn by God to us without any first movement on our part, or any possibility of repaying

the debt incurred, may be made to hang *an* argument, and I believe *the only* complete and satisfactory argument, for serving God without reserve. And when we look to examples of men who have served God truly, that is, with all their mind and soul and strength, whether in ancient or in modern times, we find that this was the argument that constrained them; they were constrained by the love of Christ; this was the case with the Apostles, we have their own evidence to the fact, and holy men of our own day have added their testimony to the same; and certainly, if this argument be in any case found to have no practical force, if men are not moved by it, if they think God's service a burden, and prefer the service of sin, or fancy that they would be happier without service of any kind, then such men can be touched by no argument; if the love of Christ does not constrain, what is there in heaven, or in earth, or in hell, which can be expected to have any constraining power?

But I must pass on to observe, that the Church Catechism, not content with teaching the child to serve God *truly*, adds the words "all the days of my life;" and these final words deserve some notice at our hands. That they are true is unquestionable; that is, if it be a duty to serve God truly, that duty must extend over the whole life;

it is manifestly absurd to suppose, that the service of God may be omitted in the early part of our lives, and that we may make up for lost time at the end of them. The common system of putting off religious thoughts until we perceive our end approaching, making peace with God after living in enmity with Him during all our lives,—all this popular perversion of religion is palpably absurd and unreasonable; and the Church Catechism could not do otherwise than instruct the child, that its duties commenced at once,—that having been baptized as a child it is its duty to serve God *as* a child,—that every day given to the world, the flesh, and the devil is a day too much,—that the child which is old enough to repeat the Catechism, is old enough to answer for itself to God. But if we ask, how many children, who repeat this answer of the Catechism, really act upon it, I suppose that we shall find the number very small, compared with the whole number of those who repeat it; and that this always will be so I do not doubt; there are so many arguments of power to flesh and blood, in favour of putting off or neglecting the service of God and enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, that I d ubt not, that, as long as the world lasts, the duty of serving God all the days of our life, from the font to the grave, from youth with its impetuous passions to old age with its

habits formed and fixed for good or evil, will be by a large portion of professed Christians neglected; to talk of the duty is easy, to prove that it is a duty is easy, nay it is easy to shew that it is our chief privilege, and that in the exercise of it consists our only hope of emancipation from the power of evil, our only hope of perfect freedom either in this life or in the life to come; but unfortunately the clearest string of argument often fails before temptation, and he who in his heart believes it to be his duty to serve God, and who means what he says when he uses the expression in the Church Catechism, will be frequently diverted from his duty, or led to put off the performance of it to a more convenient season, by some bosom sin which so easily besets him. And thus I think that there is much force in the words "all the days of my life;" if any one wishes to judge of the difficulty of serving God truly, let him take good account of these words, for practically (I believe) most men delude themselves with the notion that it is easy to serve God, and that they themselves can serve Him, because they omit the force of these same words. *Serve Him?* O yes,—what is the difficulty? of course we ought to serve Him, and I intend myself to serve Him, I hope to serve Him in Heaven—this is the kind

of view, which, either openly or without being well aware of it themselves, thousands of men take; but the very notion of *intending* to serve God is destructive of any claim to performance of the duty of which I speak; to serve God *all* the days of my life of course involves serving Him *now*, this present day which is now passing is one of the days of my life, and therefore I am bound upon *it* to serve Him; and not to be serving Him now not only is a breach of duty in itself, but affords a fearful argument of the probability, that we never shall serve Him at all.

Therefore in conclusion, Christian Brethren, I would beg of you all, old and young, to consider whether you are truly serving God; it is a simple question for me to put to you, or for you to put to yourselves, but to give a satisfactory answer, such as will stand in the judgment, requires on your part much consideration and thought. I judge no man; it is ever my effort and desire to lead you solemnly to judge yourselves; I would only say, for your own sakes take a broad and a deep view of what is meant by serving God, and if you have reason to think that the duty has been neglected, lose no time in mending your ways and seeking to serve Him in all things with true purpose of heart. Lose no time, I say; for

the youngest of you is bound to serve God all the days of his life; and moreover there is not one amongst you, who is able certainly to say, whether any more days of life remain, in which he will be permitted to serve God.

# SERMON XIII.

TO LOVE MY NEIGHBOUR AS MYSELF, AND TO DO TO ALL MEN, AS I WOULD THEY SHOULD DO UNTO ME.

S. Matthew vii. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

In the foregoing sermons, I have discussed, and endeavoured to enforce separately, the various heads of duty, which are brought together in the answer to the first of the two questions founded by the Catechism upon the Ten Commandments,—What is your duty towards God? It seems to me that I shall be following a very useful and practical line of teaching, if I now proceed to bring before you in order the heads of the answer to the second question founded upon the same Commandments, namely, What is your duty towards your neighbour? The former series of sermons was an expansion of the first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with

all thy heart and mind and soul and strength; the series which I now commence would seem to be an almost necessary supplement, being the expansion of that second commandment, which our blessed Lord declared to be like unto the first—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

And allow me here to remind you of what I have already remarked, namely, that the plain practical teaching, which it is desirable to give in church, is much advantaged by being occasionally thrown into the form of a connected series of sermons, stretching over some considerable portion of time. For the connexion of one part of the series with another tends much to strengthen the impression of the whole; and each has some effect in reviving the recollection of its predecessors; and the danger of a sermon being listened to for the half-hour during which it lasts, and then being altogether forgotten, is certainly diminished, though perhaps not altogether done away with. Moreover the treatment of one subject in a series of sermons or lectures, makes it possible to give a more complete and well-balanced view of it, than can well be given in detached discourses; and if the excitement caused by constantly hearing some new thing be to a certain extent checked, this is a result not to be deprecated; on the other hand, it helps to counteract that tendency, which

is always to be feared, of thinking too much of the mere pleasure of listening to sermons, and of forgetting to "take heed how we hear."

I proceed then to make some remarks to you upon the first head of duty towards our neighbour, which the summary in the Church Catechism brings before us. It tells us, that our duty towards our neighbour is to love him as ourselves, and to do to all men as we would that they should do to us; and I have chosen for a text some words of our Lord, with which you must all be familiar, of which the words in the Church Catechism are almost the echo; "therefore," says our Lord, "all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." These being our Lord's own words, and being clearly the expression of the same truth as that which the child is taught to put at the head of its duty towards its neighbour, there can be no question about proving the reality of the duty; there can be no question in any one's mind, that the Church Catechism bases the catalogue of particulars upon the true and only foundation: nevertheless there are several thoughts suggested to us by the form of our Lord's speech in the text, and by the peculiar test of brotherly love which is there given; and these will be found worthy of our attention.

In the first place I would observe, that the word with which the text begins—"therefore"—would seem to give it a connexion with what precedes, and that it will be instructive to inquire the meaning of this connexion. Now if you look at the context, you will find that at the 7th verse of the chapter the Lord commenced a new division of His sermon, of which division the text is the conclusion. He is speaking of prayer; He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" and then He goes on to enforce the duty of prayer by reference to our own conduct towards our children, drawing the very plain conclusion, that if we with all our infirmities still answer our children's prayers, much more will our heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him: up to this point all is clear and easy, but then follow apparently somewhat abruptly the words of the text, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." How do these words hang on to the preceding part of the discourse? I think we shall be able to understand this, by observing that in the exhortation to prayer, of which I have just now spoken, our Lord is in reality only taking up a point in the former part of His sermon; it is in

the preceding chapter that He first introduces the subject of prayer, and in it He not only gives directions concerning prayer in general, but He utters that particular form of prayer, which has been used by His disciples ever since and known as the Lord's Prayer. Now if we look to this prayer, and then regard the clause of which the text forms the last verse as a recurrence to the same subject, we shall be able I think to understand, why Christ began His golden rule with a "therefore," and so made it to hang upon what He had already said: for you are well aware of the fact, that our blessed Lord teaches us in His prayer to make our own conduct towards our brethren the measure of the grace which we venture to ask of God: "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us,"—forgive us *so*, and only *so*—and this being the ground upon which we ask for forgiveness of sins, it is not to be much wondered at, that He, who taught us thus to pray, should also teach us to be careful, lest our own conduct should condemn us and prevent our prayers from being heard; in fact if we pray to God to deal with us as we deal with others, it is a necessary caution that we should be taught to deal with our neighbours, as we would wish them to deal with us. I have little doubt of this being the true connexion of the

text; and I think it important to notice it, because it brings the duty of love to our brethren into immediate connexion with our daily prayers; it teaches us, before we go to offer our gift at the altar, constantly to inquire how we stand affected towards our brethren, and whether there be any unkindness or want of charity between us, which is likely to prevent our offering from being accepted. But whether the precept of Christ does thus hang upon His prayer or no, this is quite certain, that the text is a portion of a paragraph in the sermon on the Mount entirely relating to prayer; and therefore we have this point placed beyond doubt, that somehow the question of asking mercies from our Father in Heaven and obtaining them, did in the mind of Christ immediately connect itself with that of our conduct towards our brethren.

Next I would remark to you, that the precept in the text, though in a certain sense the same as that of which Christ afterwards spoke as His new commandment, is in another sense old. I have on a former occasion[1] endeavoured to explain, how the commandment, which Christ called His new commandment, could properly be so called; and I will just add, that the manner in which the commandment is given in the text, helps to illus-

[1] Parish Sermons, Series III. Sermon XVIII.

trate the sense, in which it was afterwards delivered as *new:* for you will remember, that the point which gave the new character to the commandment was the fact, that Christ gave as the test and measure of the love of His disciples towards each other, the words "as I have loved you;" the new kind of love which Christ had shewn towards mankind, was to throw such a new life into the notion of brotherly love, as to raise the mere skeleton of the duty involved in doing one's neighbour no harm, into the living body of Christian charity, which ever seeks our brother's good. Now you will observe, that our Lord in the text does not give this new and expansive notion of brotherly love; He does not say "as I have done for you, so do ye do for one another," for indeed the precept would not have been at the time intelligible; but He gives the simple and universally intelligible rule, "as you wish others to do to you, so do ye to them;" and under this form the rule was not new; it lacked precisely that feature, which he added to the commandment, when He breathed a new life into it by basing it upon His own immeasurable love. And pray observe, that Christ not only did not claim for the precept any originality, if I may so speak, but He expressly disclaimed it: He gives this as the sanction of the rule, that it was "the law and the

prophets," that is to say, that all the precepts, which had been given of old concerning our conduct one towards another, were briefly comprehended in this one saying, that we should do to all men as we would that they should do to ourselves; the Lord gave this as a key to the whole, and would have us to understand, that if we once master this great principle, and make it the real principle of our conduct, all particular duties will be easily, and as a matter of course, performed. And so you will remember that S. Paul represents the matter: he says,[1] "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." What Christ did then was to bring together scattered duties under one general head, and supply a principle which should be applicable to them all. So that you will perceive how consistent our blessed Lord was in this teaching of His, with the declaration which He made, that He was not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil them; He did not

[1] Romans xiii. 8—10.

come for the purpose of assuring men, that until that time they had not known their duty, but to charge rather this upon their consciences, that knowing their duty they had not fulfilled it; and He regarded it as His mission, not only to enlighten the minds of men upon what they ought to do, but much more to supply them with new motives and a perfect example, which should help them to do that, which they had often confessed that they ought to have done. Indeed, with regard to the question, whether the rule given in the text were a new one, enunciated by Christ for the first time, I would remark, that something like the same rule was given by a Heathen philosopher; he did not give it in precisely the same form, but I do not think it wise on that account to endeavour to depreciate it as compared with the golden rule of Christ; I would rather hail with delight such a beautiful flower in the wilderness, and take it as an evidence of the noble being of man, that he was able to excogitate in the darkness of heathen times a rule recognised and approved by Christ.[1]

[1] "Some will perhaps remember in Gibbon's *Memoirs* his sneer concerning this precept, that, extolled as it was, he had read the same in a work written four hundred years before Christ announced it in the Gospel; in proof of which he adduces a passage from Isocrates,—which by the way is no anticipation at all, for it is merely the negative injunction of

But now let me say a few words upon the rule itself. It has been called the *golden rule;* and, regarded as a practical rule of life, I do not know how we can speak of it in any way, which shall exaggerate its excellence: I think that no one regarding it from a purely practical point of view would say anything concerning it, except that it was full of wisdom. But if we look into it more closely, and discuss the ground upon which love to our neighbours appears to be made dependent, an objection may be raised which I think it worth while to notice. The objection is this, that the rule of brotherly love is apparently made by the text a selfish rule, that is, that our conduct towards

not doing to others what we are unwilling to suffer from them, a rule marvellously distant from Christ's law of an active love. But Augustine, so far from being afraid of the charge that the precepts of the Gospel are old, or that others said them before Christ, makes it the glory of the written and spoken law, that it is the transcript of that which was from the first, and not merely as old as this man or that, but as the creation itself, a reproduction of the assumed and obscure law written at the beginning by the finger of God on the hearts of all men. When therefore heathen sages or poets proclaimed any part of this, they had not thereby anticipated Christ, they had only deciphered some fragment of that law, which He gave from the first; and which, when many fugitives from themselves and from the knowledge of their own hearts had lost the power of reading, He came in the flesh to read to them anew, and to bring out its well-nigh obliterated chronicles afresh."—*Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, drawn from the writings of S. Augustine,* by R. C. Trench.

others appears to be made to rest upon their conduct towards ourselves. To which it may be at once answered, that any notion of limiting our kindness to others by the kindness of others towards ourselves, could never for one moment have been harboured in the mind of Him, who bid us love our enemies, and to do good and lend hoping for nothing again, after the example of our Father in Heaven, who is kind to the unthankful and the ignorant, and makes His sun to shine upon the just and unjust. We might feel quite sure therefore, that our Lord would not have given a precept, which would have admitted of a meaning so opposed to the spirit of His teaching; but in reality a very little consideration will shew, that Christ did not appeal to any selfish principle as the ground of brotherly love; He only appealed to that feeling, which, if we examine, we shall find to be the only test of right conduct towards our brother. For what do we mean by being kind? we answer, that we speak of performing actions which will please our neighbour: how do we know that they will please him? because, if we were under the same circumstances, we are sure that they would please us. We are compelled, you see, by the nature of the case to fancy ourselves in the situation of another, in order that we may be able to judge of conduct, whether it be gratifying or the

reverse. As when we speak of a taste being sweet or sour, of a colour being cheerful or gloomy, of a sound being pleasing or harsh, we refer to the effect which we know to be produced upon our own senses by the taste or colour or sound in question; so have we no other measure of the character of actions, than that which is supplied by a reference to our own feelings, and by considering how the conduct in question would appear to us.

When therefore our Lord says, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," He neither recognises nor fosters any feeling of selfishness properly so called; He only refers to a method of measuring the character of our actions, which we may easily perceive to be the only method by which our actions can be estimated aright. Indeed the practical application of the rule which our Lord gave, is so direct and simple, and the application of it so entirely frees the rule itself from all difficulty, that I should hardly have thought it worth while to clear it from a fault which might be found with it, if it had not been that I have sometimes heard the objection raised. I gladly pass on to say something concerning the practical application of the rule, and to admonish you of the need of bringing it to bear upon the ordinary circumstances of your lives.

And first I would observe, that although the

rule of the text has been called the golden rule, and although it is manifest that the adoption of it by all of us as our rule of life would lead to the most happy results, still as a matter of fact it is for the most part followed as little as any rule can be. I will undertake to say, that with nine out of ten amongst us, when we consider whether we shall pursue a particular line of conduct or not, the question will be,—whether will this conduce to my advantage? and not,—whether, if I were in my neighbour's place, should I wish it to be done? This is no libel upon mankind; indeed many people would defend the plan of action, and say that every one must look out for himself, and attend to his own interests: and no doubt this is true; it is true, not only because as the world goes a man may be sure that if he does not care for himself no one will care for him, but it is true upon higher and better grounds; it is the order of God's providence, that each one should be diligent in doing his own work, which is in fact on the long run the same thing as advancing his own interests; the world would be a much worse place than it is, if there were not in every man of sound mind the instinctive desire of carrying out his plans. But then this principle may be stretched, so as to form a cover for all the selfishness that the world contains; and it was in this sense that S. Paul

complained pathetically of his need of partners in his work, because "all," as he said, "seek their own;" and there are abundance of cases even in our ordinary intercourse with each other, in which the rule of every one seeking his own clearly tends to the neglect of Christian duty. I will not dwell upon them now, because some of them will come before us hereafter in the natural course of our subject.

I would rather say, that he who prefers the harsher rule of leaving every one to take care of himself, of seeking in all things our own advantage and leaving others to do the same, can hardly remember that parable of our Lord concerning the hard-hearted servant: he, who had been forgiven a thousand talents, laying hands upon his brother, who owed him a hundred pence: it was a lawful debt, the creditor had a right to the money, the magistrate would have supported him in his claim;—it is very true, and no doubt human law is frequently compelled by the very necessity of the case, by the weakness belonging to it as human law, to sanction hard-hearted deeds, and to protect conduct which Christ would condemn; but this is just what I wish to mark, that Christ's law is of a higher kind than human law, and judging as it does according to the thoughts and intents of the heart, it bids us to look to the

thoughts and intents of the heart before we venture to submit our conduct to be examined by it. Take for instance the case of the servant in the parable; he had a right to the money,—well—but would he have thought the right to have been one, which ought to be exercised, had he been the debtor instead of the creditor? *that* was the point which he ought to have considered; *there* comes in the application of Christ's golden rule.

Lastly, I would remind you, not only that a rule like that of the text is of no use unless it be applied, but also that it is not to be employed now and then only, but constantly, habitually, as the principle of all our dealings with our fellow-men. Whenever we do or say anything that may affect any one of our brethren, the thought should be immediately in our minds,—should I, if I were in my brother's situation, think this kind, reasonable, justifiable? And the habit is soon acquired, if it be earnestly commenced; it is only the beginning that is difficult; and very soon a person, who has accustomed himself to this mode of action, acts according to the rule without effort, hardly knowing that he is applying Christ's rule. Think, Christian Brethren, whether you are acting upon this principle, following this rule; and remember, that it is your *duty* to your neighbour to follow it; aye—your duty, you are bound to it, it is no

stretch of benevolence on your part to act thus; your neighbour has a right, just because he *is* your neighbour, to demand this kind of treatment at your hands. And as for yourselves, take care that you do not destroy your own prayers, and prevent your sins from being forgiven, by acting towards your neighbour in a manner which your duty towards him forbids.

# SERMON XIV.

## TO LOVE, HONOUR, AND SUCCOUR MY FATHER AND MOTHER.

S. Matthew xv. 3, 4, 5, 6.

But He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?
For God commanded saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.
But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;
And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Though there may be difference of opinion concerning some smaller points involved in this passage, the general meaning is perfectly distinct and clear. We all know that the Jews were bound by one of the Ten Commandments, which God gave them, to honour their fathers and mothers; and we may be quite sure, that this commandment was not intended to be an empty

one, but to enforce a very real and practical duty: it was not intended, that the son should interpret the honouring of his father and mother to mean merely paying them an outward respect; the spirit of the command clearly went beyond this, and made it the duty of those who had been nourished in their years of helplessness by father and mother to support their father and mother in return, or at least to succour them to the best of their ability, when age brought on the second period of helplessness. For you will observe, that the fifth commandment was not addressed to children only; so far as it applied to them, it might be quite sufficient to interpret it as meaning, that a child should pay to its parents all due respect and obedience, return love for love, shew gratitude for the kindness and care for which it can never be out of debt, speak of its father and mother with all reverence, submit to them after the example of Jesus Christ, and in a word regard them as standing more nearly than any one else in the place of God. And when a child repeats the Church Catechism, this is the kind of meaning which one desires it to attach to the words, "to love, honour, and succour my father and mother." But then the commandment does not belong to children only; it was given as a rule to the whole Israelitish people, and was beyond all others the

law, upon the due keeping of which their national prosperity was to depend. Hence therefore I say, that the command must involve more than outward respect, and must have been interpreted by those who studied the law, as implying a duty on the part of all men and women to do the most that they could for the comfort and succour and support of a father or of a mother, no longer able to help themselves.

Now this commandment would frequently lay upon men's shoulders a burden, which they would be unwilling to bear. And when men do not like to obey a commandment, they very soon find an excuse for breaking it: the most honest, and (I believe) in the sight of God the least offensive way of getting rid of an unpleasant commandment is to break through it boldly and brave the consequences; but men very seldom like to do this, no man likes to appear in his own eyes as a wicked man; whatever other people may think, you generally find that a man can give an account of himself which is to him in a certain way satisfactory; and however inexcusable conduct may appear to others, a man generally contrives to excuse it to himself. So it was in the case of this command to the Israelites; they did not say, the command is hard and unreasonable,—indeed they could not very well say that, for their own con-

sciences would have broken out into rebellion,—nor did they determine to set the law at defiance, which also they could scarcely have done with any consistency, forasmuch as they were glorying all the while in the privileges which the law gave them; but they did the very worst and most dishonest thing that they possibly could do, they set aside the plain command of God, which a sense of gratitude and natural piety sanctioned, under the pretence of serving God, whose command they disobeyed. They saved their property from all claims upon it for the support of father and mother, by the fiction that it was offered to God, and therefore might not be touched for secular purposes. Interpreters seem not to be quite agreed as to the way in which this fiction was carried out; but that it *was* a fiction, a most unholy piece of hypocrisy, and that a pretence of religion was made the cloak of a sin, there can be no doubt whatever. Hence it was that in the text our Lord rebuked the people of His time so severely: they quoted the traditions of the elders against His disciples, because they had not washed their hands when the tradition said they ought; and what had those who kept the tradition done? they had kept it at the expense of giving up a much more sacred tradition, the tradition of God Himself.

The general nature of the sin which our Lord reproved is therefore abundantly clear: and now observe that the prevalence of this sin,—for I suppose from our Lord's language that it *was* prevalent—that the prevalence of this sin is connected with an extremely low moral condition of the Jewish nation. One might feel pretty well assured upon general grounds, that this must have been so; I mean, that we might feel sure, that such a sin as that which our Lord condemned, such a recognised method of evading a great duty by a piece of religious hypocrisy, could not stand alone; if the general religious condition of the nation had been healthy, such hypocrisy would have been scouted; individuals might have neglected their duty, as indeed there always will be individuals under the most favourable circumstances who will neglect their duty, but there could not have been that general combination for the purpose of throwing the cloak of religious respectability over each other's impiety, unless there had been a very widespread religious disease in the nation. And it seems clear from all that we know of the condition of things, that religion was in fact at a very low ebb; there was the form of it without the power; the whited sepulchre without, the foul corruption within; this we might gather from our Lord's discourses, if from nothing else; that fault of hypocrisy, which He continually

reprobates and sometimes with such fearful emphasis, is the fault, which argues, more perhaps than any other, a general decay of real religious principle.

You will remember also, that not only was the religious condition of the Jews in our Lord's time in a state of extreme decay, but the nation was upon the verge of destruction as a nation. You may say, what has the fact of the destruction of the holy city and the national existence of the people to do with the subject now before us? This: the command to honour father and mother was connected by Moses with a long continuance in the land, which God had given the people: very remarkable indeed is this connexion; probably the Jews did not think much of it; they would not reflect, that a want of duty towards their parents was perhaps ruining the nation; and when they had adopted the wretched subterfuge exposed by our Lord in the text, they would probably not consider, that this hypocrisy was undermining their tenure of the Holy Land. And possibly persons in our own day might say, that the breaking up of the Jewish nation was due to other causes, and that it is superstitious to attribute the downfall of the people to one particular sin. I would not wish so to attribute their downfall, nor do I question the fact of a number of

causes having conspired to produce the result; but at the same time I do think, that it is impossible to read of the very striking manner, in which the honouring of father and mother was made the condition of remaining long in the land, without being struck by the fact, that the loss of the land did in reality take place at a period, when the command with promise had been not only systematically, but most hypocritically, made of none effect.

Hence therefore we are able to connect the duty of honouring parents with the wellbeing of the nation at large, at all events in the case of the Jews. But I apprehend, that the connexion, declared to exist in the fifth commandment between these two things, was not established by that commandment for the Jewish nation as distinct from all other nations, but that contrariwise a principle was enunciated which would be true for all nations. I apprehend we are justified in inferring, that which we might perhaps have concluded on other grounds, namely, that the whole of a nation is concerned in the question of the manner in which duty towards parents is regarded. Indeed it is impossible to expect, that young persons should grow up to be good citizens, who are not good sons and good daughters; for here is the great primary duty, the duty moreover which it is most

easy to perform, because natural instinct and gratitude are on its side, and the suggestions of the devil do not find in this case by any means so much support within as in many others; hence if young persons are deficient in this duty, what other duty can you expect them to perform? can you expect submission to pastors and masters, or loyalty to the Queen, or a patriotic love of country, or piety towards God, when the great primary duty of submission to parents has been set aside? And in matter of fact, I believe that some of our own worst social evils are due to the diseased condition of the relation of children to their parents; how far this is the fault of the parents I do not now say, though I will remark in passing that there does seem to me to be much fault on this side; I have frequently had brought under my notice an absence of parental feeling, and a total want of all sense of parental responsibility, which has astonished as much as it has grieved me; and undoubtedly where there is no parental love to a child, there is not likely to be much filial love to a parent; the duty may not be cancelled, but certainly in nine cases out of ten the duty will not be paid; and in such cases it is for God the righteous Judge and not for us to condemn; but wherever may be the fault, the result is the same, the general character of the people suffers, and

the interests of the nation as a nation are injured, by the general loosening of the bonds of duty which bind children to their parents. There is no difference between ourselves and the Jews; the fifth commandment is a command of promise to both; and a wholesome state of feeling concerning the mutual relations of parents and children may be regarded by ourselves in as important and practical a point of view, as it was by the Jews of old.

This leads me to remark, that when in the Church Catechism the child is taught to say that its duty towards its neighbour is amongst other things "to love honour and succour its father and mother," it may be that this duty towards its neighbour has a meaning not at first sight apparent. It is a child's duty to regard its parents as amongst its dearest and closest neighbours, and if there be such a thing as duty towards our neighbour and the question be asked, Who is my neighbour? certainly the names of our parents ought to be among the first that rise in our minds in answer to the question; but I wish to point out, that duty to parents rightly discharged is a performance of duty towards our neighbour upon a still broader scale; because if obedience to the fifth commandment be a matter of national importance, then it is our duty, not

only towards our parents, but towards all our neighbours who form the whole nation, to obey the command. The matter does not in fact lie merely between the parents and their children; they cannot confine to themselves the benefit of a fifth commandment kept, nor the mischief of a fifth commandment broken; and therefore it is in a very wide sense indeed a duty towards our neighbour, to keep a law, the breaking of which is certain to injure not ourselves only, but him, our neighbour, as well.

Nevertheless, I have not the least desire to diminish the importance to each person individually of loving and honouring his parents; on the other hand I believe, that nothing can be said, which shall put in too strong a light the importance of this great duty to the religious condition of each one of us. It is impossible to say positively, that no one can become a good man unless he commences his life in such or such a way; but certainly we may say, that in general the foundation of subsequent usefulness and of a true godly life must be laid in obedience to parents; and for this very good reason, that in the case of a young person it may be said, that there is one duty and one duty only; a child is situated as Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, with one command upon them, one test

of duty, one pledge of allegiance; and therefore to break this one is to break all; a young person, who has been guilty of undutiful conduct, cannot make the excuse that he was engaged with the consideration of other pressing duties, and that so this one escaped notice, because this is the one great comprehensive duty in which alone the child's attention ought to be fixed. If therefore a child be undutiful, what can you expect afterwards? how can you hope that the complicated duties of manhood will be dealt with aright, when the one duty of childhood has been neglected?

No wonder therefore that the command to honour father and mother should stand at the head of the second table of God's Laws; its place of preeminence implying, that if we would prevent murder, and theft, and adultery, and false witness, and covetousness in men and women, we must instil the duty of obedience to parents into the minds of children; implying also perhaps, that if this one commandment be faithfully kept, we need hardly go beyond it. No wonder also that in deducing a complete account of duty towards our neighbour from the Table of Commandments, the Church Catechism should place at the very head of particular duties this great duty of loving, honouring, and succouring our fathers and mothers. This is the right place for the command

and for the duty, as perhaps may appear from what I have already said, and as (I am convinced) will appear more and more plainly the more we consider the subject.

I need perhaps hardly refer in illustration of this duty to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ; the duty scarcely requires illustration, and the beautiful tale of our Lord's boyhood in S. Luke's Gospel will at once occur to your minds without any reference on my part; nevertheless, the obedience and submission of our Lord to His earthly parents does to us Christians so thoroughly form part and parcel of the subject of filial duty, that I cannot pass by this most marvellous and even mysterious instance of what children ought to do. "He was subject unto them"—*that* is the account which S. Luke gives of our Lord's conduct, when Joseph and Mary had found Jesus in the Temple, and when He left disputing with the doctors of the Law to go home to Nazareth with His father and mother: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." *He*—the incarnate Son of God! what a wonderful lesson of submission, and what a protest against all rebellious and undutiful and disrespectful feelings, and ungracious unloving conduct, on the part of children towards their parents, for all subsequent generations of mankind!

Let me remind you also, that this duty towards parents is one which our Blessed Lord illustrated, not only by submission in His boyhood, but by succour bestowed afterwards. Perhaps you may never have noticed the fact in connexion with the fifth commandment, but there *is* a fact recorded by S. John, which is very instructive when so regarded: S. John tells us,[1] that as Jesus was hanging upon the cross, himself and the blessed Virgin Mary and some others were standing by and looking on: and he tells us moreover, that the last act, which Jesus performed, before He said "It is finished," and bowed His head and gave up the ghost, was to commit His mother to S. John's care and keeping: "Woman," said the Lord to His mother, when He saw S. John standing by, "Behold thy son," and S. John tells us that he took her to his own home: a very touching incident this taken in any way, but much more than touching, because full of instruction and admonition, when we regard it as shewing, that all the personal agony which Christ endured, and the pressure of that awful work in which He was engaged, could not prevent Him from caring for His human mother, and putting in His last dying moments this remarkable seal upon the bond betwixt mother and son.

[1] S. John xix. 25, 26, 27.

I need hardly say, that the right application of this subject is for each person to consider in what way he is performing this great duty. Young persons may very well take the subject especially to themselves: and the more so, because there is (I think) in these days a tendency to make light of the duty of filial respect and reverence, even amongst those who are sufficiently influenced by education to save them from actual disobedience; there is a tendency to put in the background the feelings of true love and reverence, and to forget the infinite debt of gratitude, which is incurred by the love and care and watchfulness expended over our infant years. And thus it appears to me, that perhaps many a young person, who is far from thinking himself a bad son, and indeed far from being so, may nevertheless find upon examination, that the tone of mind with which he regards his father or his mother is not always worthy of a Christian, because not in tune with the recorded conduct of Christ. I will only say, that I am sure that any person who finds his conscience reproach him upon this point, and who endeavours in the fear of God to mend his ways, will find the whole tone of his mind and character,—his religious feelings towards God, his sense of other duties,—all improved and strengthened by the effort. He who reverences as he

ought his father upon earth, will almost always reverence more than others his Father in heaven.

One word more. The Church Catechism is put into the mouths of children, and therefore dwells chiefly upon those duties which belong to children; and this peculiarity is to be borne in mind in considering the catalogue of duties toward our neighbour. That catalogue says nothing of duties of parents towards children, and the reason which I have now given will account for the omission; but I wish to remind you in few words, that parents *have* duties; aye—very great and tremendous duties; who shall say *how* great, when we think, that in God's good providence upon the care and conduct of parents depends in a very great degree the happiness or wretchedness of those children whom God has given them? and what sin can be greater, than by our neglect, or selfishness, or want of personal piety, to do what we can to produce the temporal and eternal ruin of these precious gifts of God?

# SERMON XV.

## TO HONOUR AND OBEY THE QUEEN, AND ALL THAT ARE PUT IN AUTHORITY UNDER HER.

ROMANS xiii. 1.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.

IF any one were asked, what was his opinion of the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romans, as compared with other books of Scripture, I suppose he would probably say, that it was one of the most profound and difficult, that the Bible contains. He would be a bold man if he professed entirely to comprehend the whole of it; he would say that the most learned and most pious Christians had confessed the difficulty of the subject, and that although he could find much wisdom in it, he would not undertake to assert that he had done more than pick up a few crumbs out of the abundance of spiritual food contained in the Epistle.

Yet the Epistle is not all of this difficult kind. Beginning with the twelfth chapter and going on to the end, you find nothing but the most practical exhortations to holiness, and the simplest matters of Christian life and Christian charity. And so it is, that in the text you find the same S. Paul, who in the earlier chapters of his letter has sounded every depth of mysterious doctrine, taking occasion to impress upon his disciples the duty of obeying the higher powers. He seems to have no difficulty in passing from one kind of teaching to the other; there is no abrupt transition; no apology for introducing matters of a somewhat secular aspect into a letter treating chiefly of the highest Christian doctrines; on the other hand, duty seems to flow from doctrine in the most natural manner possible, and the Apostle knows of no duty which is secular, because to a Christian all duties are consecrated, as being done for the love of Christ.

I call your attention to the manner in which the text is introduced for two reasons. First, because it is a good illustration of the manner in which Christian doctrine is ever made by the Apostles the ground of Christian duty: they do not often teach us new duties, in fact there are very few duties in any part of the New Testament which were not either recognised in the Old, or

else perceived to be duties by the light which is naturally in the human mind; but the great feature of the New Testament teaching is this, that all duties whatever are put upon a higher ground than they occupied before; what Christ has done for us is made the measure of what we should do and the argument why we should do it, and Christians are regarded not so much in the character of men who know more than their fellows, as in the character of men who feel themselves bound by the mercies of God and the love of Christ to offer themselves up a living sacrifice. But secondly, I call your attention to the point, because I wish you to see from the place assigned to it by S. Paul, that the duty of "honouring and obeying the Queen, and all who are in authority under her," which the Church Catechism places high amongst our duties towards our neighbour, is rightly so placed,—that it *is* a great duty, and one to be performed by all Christians upon true Christian principles.

And a circumstance, which makes the prominence assigned by S. Paul to the duty more striking, is the character of the higher powers in his days, to whom he exhorted Christian people to be subject. To us, who have a Christian Queen, there might seem to be no difficulty in rendering to her and her commands all due honour and

respect and obedience, even though she had much more power over us than she actually has; there is something like the tie of children to a parent existing between a Christian people and a Christian Queen, as indeed might be suggested to us by the fact, that the Church Catechism puts duty to parents and duty to the Queen next to each other in the list. But things were very different when S. Paul wrote the words of the text; the Emperor of Rome, far from being a Christian, was not even a moderately virtuous heathen; he was in fact a very monster of iniquity, and made himself infamous amongst other things by his gross cruelty towards the Christians; and this being so, one might have fancied that a Christian teacher would have said as little as possible about obedience to the higher powers; we might have supposed probably, that he would on all grounds have abstained from inciting Christians to insurrection, but when we consider how infinitely exalted the Christians must have felt themselves to be above a heathen Emperor, sunk in vice and cruelty and pleasure, by their allegiance to their heavenly king, we could scarcely have been surprised if the point of submission to the Emperor had been by general agreement left untouched until better times should come. Not so thought S. Paul: he looked above the man to the office: he would not

believe, that God had resigned the government of the world to the devil, because for a time wickedness flourished, and a wicked man held the sceptre which ought to have been in the hands of the purest and wisest and best of mankind; no—he boldly asserts the principle, "there is no power, but of God;" whether the king were a heathen or a Christian, a bad man or a good one, so long as God preserved him in power Christians were bound to submit. Indeed, it may perhaps have been partly on account of the bad character of the Roman Emperor, that S. Paul thought it the more necessary to impress his lesson; had he been a good man and a Christian, the duty might perhaps have been taken for granted; but forasmuch as the absence of these claims to respect might have led some Christians to question the duty of submission, therefore S. Paul would think it necessary to put upon the duty the seal of his own Apostolic authority.

You may notice also, that the text is not the only place in which teaching of this kind has found entrance into the Apostolic Epistles. Thus you may remember, that in writing to Titus S. Paul gives this direction as to the teaching which should be employed by him as Bishop of Crete: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates:" and

this practical advice concerning the enforcement of the duties of the Cretan Christians as citizens immediately follows a passage, in which the Apostle has been speaking of "the grace of God which had appeared to all men, teaching them that denying ungodliness and worldly lust they should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:" and thus we have another instance of the ease with which S. Paul passed from high Christian doctrine to plain Christian duty.

There is one other passage, with which we are all familiar, but which I think it worth while to quote, because it is from S. Peter and not from S. Paul, and because we thus see that it was no peculiarity of S. Paul to put the duties of citizens upon the highest Christian ground. S. Peter, writing to the Jewish Christians scattered abroad, says,[1] "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man *for the Lord's sake:* whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and the praise of them that do well." And again, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." The fear of God and the honour of the king, as you perceive, brought as nearly together as possible.

[1] 1 Peter ii. 13, 14, 17.

S. Peter and S. Paul, then, teach us the same doctrine; and no wonder, seeing that they themselves were taught by the same spirit and acknowledged the same Lord. But beyond the mere fact of our finding such precepts, as those which I have quoted, in the writings of the Apostles, I will go on to mention two or three reasons, why we might have expected that the teaching of Christ's disciples would not omit to lay stress upon the duty of honouring and submitting to the Queen.

In the first place, the general spirit of gentleness and longsuffering, which belonged to all the teaching of Christ, would suggest, that quiet submission to authority was the right course for Christians. Christ had said, "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but if any man shall strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man take from thee thy coat, forbid him not to take thy cloak also." How far such precepts were intended to be taken literally, we need not inquire; but certainly the spirit of them would teach us, that the first impulse of the Christian mind should be to submit to authority, not to rebel against it; and that if to obey were a duty in the case of a good and holy king, it would not be the unworthiness of the king which could at once cancel the duty. In fact,

when we read such precepts as those of S. Paul and S. Peter, which I have been quoting, we feel at once that they *do* embody the Christian spirit, that Christ would have said the same things Himself, that the Apostles were truly speaking in the spirit of their Master.

Again, it is not to be forgotten that Christ Himself was declared to be a king, and that all Christians became by their profession subjects of this new kingdom. And in this kingdom submission was to be unlimited and obedience complete; the very lesson which all Christians had to learn was, that they were bound to give themselves up with all their power and all their might to be a living sacrifice to Him who redeemed them, and to do His will with all their soul and strength. Hence to a Christian the name of *king* was sanctified by its having been assumed by Christ, and the relation of people to king was hallowed; so that although it might be argued, that the belief of Christ being their king would make Christians disposed to rebel against any human authority, and although the fact of their owning allegiance to Christ as their king no doubt did make the rulers sometimes suspicious concerning them, yet it might also be reasonably urged, that they who knew the true dignity of the kingly office as interpreted by the kingly office of

Christ, and the sacred character of their relation to their spiritual king, would also be most ready to recognise as of divine appointment that office, which Christ had consecrated by taking it as the figure and type of His own.

Once more: the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh would have a great effect in enforcing such duties as those which the text contains. He who would not allow Himself to be made the means of insurrection, when the people would take Him by force and make Him a king, and who paid the tribute to avoid giving offense, and who permitted Himself to be given up to the rulers and to be tried and condemned, would certainly have given His sanction to the doctrine of the text. And doubtless it was the remembrance of the Lord's meekness and patience, that produced in the early Christians that quiet submission to violence and persecution, which so thoroughly marked the change which had been wrought in them, and which under God was so powerful a means of building up the Church. In this as in so many other things, it was the example of Christ, which had thrown a new light upon human duties, and made burdens which seemed heavy easy to be borne.

So much then for the manner, in which in the New Testament the duty of obeying the Queen

and all in authority under her has been taught and enforced; now a few words upon the duty itself. Perhaps it may be said, that in these days it is an oldfashioned duty, almost out of date; and no doubt there have been in modern times changes in the modes of government, which have tended to throw into the background that feeling of personal allegiance and duty to the Sovereign, which in olden days was very much more prominent; nevertheless, the feeling has not died out entirely, and ought not to die out; and the duty of submission, though it may have somewhat changed its complexion, is nevertheless quite as real as ever it was. There have been times in the history of our country, when the nature of the duty of submission to the sovereign has been the most important question of the day; and there have been sorrowful times, when a difference of opinion upon the subject has divided families, and set house against house in bitter civil war; and there have been critical times too, when the wisest and most conscientious men have found themselves in a strait, and have not known how to act:—concerning all which times, and the painful questions which arose in them, I have only one remark to make, namely, that by God's mercy we do not live in such times and have no such questions before us; if there be such a

duty as that of honouring the Queen, we know to whom our allegiance is due, and we may be quite sure that we shall be never called upon to perform any act in discharge of that duty, which a higher duty to God can forbid. What form then does the duty of honouring and obeying the Queen assume in these days? In the first place, I think we should endeavour to feel towards the Queen that same kind of personal love, which we do towards our parents. She should be honoured as one put in charge by God, and as having a very great charge, perhaps the most solemn charge that is entrusted to the hands of any one person upon the face of the earth at the present time. She is one, who is to be sympathised with, very much more than envied; whose responsibilities and anxieties ought to be thought of by us, quite as much as her honour and power. Moreover the interests of ourselves and our families are much more nearly connected with the conduct of the Queen than we sometimes fancy: the purity of her court, the religious tone given to affairs by her handling of them, the example in fact set by her as the chief person of a great nation, have an exceeding influence upon the tone of manners and religion throughout the whole circle of her subjects.

And this suggests, that there is one duty which

we can all perform, that is, we can pray for God's blessing on the Queen; we can do so privately, we can do so publicly; it is by Apostolic injunction that the Church ever makes supplication on behalf of the Queen and those in authority a part of her solemn worship of God: "I exhort," says S. Paul to Timothy,[1] "that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all in authority." Nor is it anything more than what the plainest dictates of Christian charity require, when we remember with what peculiar force the temptations of the world are made to bear upon the hearts of kings and queens: the very elevation, which gives them the opportunity of doing so much for the honour of God, does also render them equally conspicuous objects for the attacks of sin.

But besides this feeling of personal love towards the Queen, which we call loyalty, and which everything in the worship of the Church of England tends to foster, there is another more general form of the duty under consideration, which is of quite as much importance. When we speak of honouring and obeying the Queen and all in authority under her, I think we are bound to look upon the whole state of things under which we live: to live as subjects of Queen Victoria is to

[1] 1 Timothy ii. 1, 2.

live in the enjoyment of all the blessings which belong to us as Englishmen: and though it is foolish to exaggerate the excellence of our institutions, as though England were in all respects in advance of all the countries in the world, it is equally foolish and wrong to shut our eyes to the blessings that we possess: it would be a long catalogue if we were to name them all; but I profess that I know of no country where there is so much, or anything like so much, of true liberty, and where there is the same amount of religious privilege. Every one who thinks thus ought to shew forth his belief in a practical manner; our belief ought not to be a matter of mere national pride, but a practical principle leading us to discharge faithfully, conscientiously, and in the fear of God, our duties as citizens. And, not to dwell upon these particular duties at this time, I will remark, that the general sense of the duty, of which I am speaking, ought to shew itself in the temper with which we bear anything which falls upon us as citizens, and which may be not altogether to our taste. I mention this the rather, because it seems to be the natural instinct of Englishmen to grumble and complain; it may be said that complaints lead to improvements, and I do not deny it, and am by no means finding fault with complaints against abuses and the like, but with

the temper which men frequently exhibit with regard to things which the law sanctions; thus a man will grumble at a particular tax, or a particular rate, or a particular regulation made by law, as though we lived under a tyranny, and as though the laws were made, not for our own benefit, but at the will and for the profit of some arbitrary ruler.

I mention these things, because I would ever wish to impress upon you, that our Christian principles are to find their way into, and determine the temper of, all the transactions of our ordinary life. We are not to thank God for His blessings to us and to all men on Sunday, and then grumble all the rest of the week as though we had no blessings; neither are we to profess in church high principles of conduct, and then act in the world upon much lower principles. Christ declared that His kingdom was like leaven, which when put into a lump works gradually through it, and leavens and converts the whole of it; and so it is, or ought to be, with His kingdom in the heart of man; it is to be a thoroughly converting leavening principle, influencing the whole conduct, making a man a good citizen because he is a Christian, a loyal subject of the Queen because conscious of being a servant of God, teaching him how to use and enjoy his liberty by first making

him sensible of the possession of that liberty, with which Christ has made His people free.

And thus the subject with which we have been engaged may be useful to us, beyond the mere lessons which it teaches us as citizens and subjects of our Queen. Those lessons are not to be despised, and they are the more to be valued when we see the manner in which they are enforced by the peculiar arguments supplied by the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but it will perhaps be a better and more comprehensive lesson still, if you can learn from the subject, that every duty that you do is to be done in the fear of God and for the love of Christ; that whether it be a small thing or a great thing that we are called upon to do, the same great argument applies, "You are bought with a price"—you are bound to yield yourselves up to God a living sacrifice, and to shew by the manner in which you perform your duty towards your neighbour the sense that you have of the infinite love of God towards you in Jesus Christ.

# SERMON XVI.

## TO SUBMIT MYSELF TO ALL MY GOVERNORS, TEACHERS, SPIRITUAL PASTORS AND MASTERS.

HEBREWS, xiii. 17.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

I PROPOSE from this text to take occasion to speak to you concerning that article of duty towards our neighbour, which is expressed in the Church Catechism by the words, "to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters." This article has the appearance of being particularly directed to children and young persons; indeed I suppose that there are not a few, who would in terms repudiate the notion of submitting themselves for submission' sake, as a Christian duty, as a freewilling offering to God; nor do I deny that probably the duty of sub-

mission was intended to be brought by the Church Catechism before the minds of young persons specially for their own improvement. You will remember, that the Catechism is a form of instruction for those who are to be confirmed, that is, for quite young persons; and therefore there would be no occasion for surprise, if we should find in it many more precepts than we actually do find of a nature adapted for children, and having no application or very little to grown-up persons. Certainly the passage, which I have just now quoted, has very much of this appearance; certainly there are few duties which young persons would gain more advantage from learning and practising, than that of submitting themselves to their teachers and masters; certainly also, there are few duties harder to learn, or more frequently neglected. I do not desire to lose sight of this application of the duty, on the other hand I intend to treat of the duty in the first instance as a duty of young persons; but on the other hand, I should deem it equally wrong to omit the consideration of the fact, that the duty outlives childhood, and has its application to persons in all times of life; and this I imagine will be seen at once to be true from the text, in which the Apostle, writing not to children but to Christian men and women, uses language

strongly reminding us of the words of the Catechism—"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves."

In the first place then, considering the duty of submission to "governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters," as a duty belonging to young persons, a duty which is to be enforced under the highest authority upon all young members of the Church of England, let me remark to you, that the hint which is conveyed by the language of the Catechism is one of great value at all times, and of special value in times like our own, when the necessity of education is brought before us all so continually and so prominently. It is of the highest concern to the welfare of our country, that children should be taught not only the elements of secular knowledge, nor even the elements of religious knowledge only, but the elements of the great science of submission to those who are placed over them. I think that this principle is generally recognised in our schools; so far as I am able to judge, from what I have seen of schools in connexion with the Church of England, I am disposed thankfully to acknowledge, that the education of a child is not considered to be the same thing as infusing into the child's head a certain amount of information upon a variety of subjects; but still I fear, that

the result of our efforts to educate are not so successful as we could desire, in that formation of character which is the real end of education: indeed I believe, that if you were to ask our National Schoolmasters in general as to the fruit which they perceive to spring from their labours, you would find that they would give upon the whole a not very cheering account. What is the reason? no doubt the reason is to be sought to some extent in the intrinsic difficulty of the work, in the difficulty of overcoming that tendency to self-sufficiency and rebellion, which all the children of Adam and Eve exhibit, as soon as circumstances permit; no doubt also, the reason is in some measure to be found in the pernicious influence of one bad boy or girl over a number of companions, an influence tenfold more efficient for evil than the precepts and exhortations of the master for good, as every master knows to his sorrow. But there seems to me to be another source of failure, which especially deserves notice, because it is one which much needs correction; and it is this; it seems to me, that our schools very much fail in producing the good moral results which might be hoped for, because the parents of the children lean upon them as the only means of influencing their children: ask a national schoolmaster why his lessons do not take

effect, and he will tell you that he has no cooperation at home, that the parents leave all to him, consider that their part in the education of their children is performed when they have sent them in the morning in good time. Now this is all quite wrong; and I mention it the rather because I have been long convinced, that the efforts made and most rightly made to supply education for our poorer brethren have incidentally the unfortunate effect of loosening the feeling of parental responsibility; the schoolmaster is regarded as a substitute for the parent, not a fellowworker with him; and I would press the consideration upon all parents, that whatever may be done for their children, either by themselves or by others, in the way of providing the means of instruction, yet after all they themselves are the true and the responsible educators, and if they give up the solemn office which God has committed to them, they must not expect that any merely human agency will make up to the child the loss, which by their negligence it must assuredly sustain.

Thus the thought of the duty of submission to teachers and masters brings before us very weighty considerations concerning parental duties; and we find that parents may take a lesson from the Catechism which they teach their children, and that if their children prove rebellious to

their masters, they may well ask themselves whether the fault is not to be laid at their own door. But the direct and principal lesson is of course to be learnt not by parents, but by children; and that which I would desire particularly to enforce is the importance of the duty of which I am speaking, in relation to the whole of the afterlife of a young person. This submission to teachers and masters is not a mere duty exacted for the sake of order, nor is it a mere tribute to be paid under fear of penalty: on the other hand, to submit humbly and obediently for submission' sake is for a young person himself the most profitable exercise possible with reference to his future character: there is ever a voice within, suggesting that submission is weak and unmanly, that the pleasant thing, the happy thing, is to have free way for our own desires, to be able to indulge ourselves without control, to speak, think, and act as we please, to eat of every tree of the garden without exception. So it was from the beginning; it was just because the suggestion of freedom *was* so congenial to the desires of flesh and blood, that the serpent found such an easy access into the mind of Eve and such an easy victory over her; but you know that in her case submission to her governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters would have been her happiness, and that wilfulness was her misery.

So it always will be; hard though it be for young persons to believe it, yet even during their youth to obey is happiness and to rebel is misery; but the more important consideration is, not what may be the effect during youth, but what the result will be in mature years; and I say that that kind of submission of which the Catechism speaks is the true foundation of a high manly character, the very fact of submission to lawful authority is itself the very best proof not of weakness but of strength—of strength, because it shews that a young person is strong enough to conquer himself, strong enough to resist those enticements to rebellion, which are sure to beset him, be he who he may.

Moreover I would have you to observe, that as all teachers and masters must be regarded as being in a certain way representatives of parents, and as deriving their authority and claim to respect from parents, so it may well be supposed that something of that special blessing promised in Scripture to those who obey their parents in the Lord will be secured to those, who submit themselves to those placed over them as teachers and masters. The character of mind, which will lead a young person to one kind of obedience, will lead them to the other; and he who will not submit himself to teachers will not be likely to be

found to be obedient to parents; and thus there would seem to be something of a divine character and sanction belonging to the duty which we are considering. If we regard the list of duties towards our neighbour, given in the Church Catechism, as deduced from the second Table of Commandments, we can have no doubt in referring this duty to the first commandment of that table; we can have no doubt in saying, that they, who compiled that list of duties, were led to affirm that it was the duty of a child to "submit itself to all its governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters," because they read in that commandment, that it was the duty of the child "to honour its father and its mother."

But I have said that the duty in question does not merely belong to young people, and I now go on to consider it in its more general application; and in doing this I shall restrict myself for convenience' sake to that part of the subject, which is marked out by the term *spiritual* pastors and masters, and which is brought before us by the text, in which the Apostle says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." I need hardly tell you, that when the Apostle used these words, he was referring to spiritual rulers, or Church authorities; that this was so is manifest from the conclusion of the verse, which runs

thus—"for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." I do not say that this is the only legitimate application of the duty to Christians in general, but certainly it is an important one, and one upon which it will perhaps be worth our while to spend a few minutes' consideration. For the relation in which the laity stand to the clergy, and their feelings towards each other, must manifestly have always very much to do with the healthy condition of the Church; sometimes there have been errors in one direction, sometimes in another, and perhaps it may be said, that upon the whole the state of things has very seldom been the most healthy conceivable. Now in the text the Apostle gives one view of the subject; and if it be not the only view, at all events it is one concerning which there can be no mistake; he speaks distinctly of a reverential submission of the general body of Christians to those placed over them as spiritual rulers; therefore there *is* such a duty, and whatever question there may be about its precise limits, there must be no question about the duty itself. Nor is the Apostle afraid to speak of the clergy as those "who have rule,"—not merely ministers or servants you will observe, but in a proper sense *rulers;* and therefore, though the authority may

be abused, still the authority itself must not be denied. And this really is the great thing to be done, namely, to claim such a submission as shall be profitable for the laity, without attempting to assume a position, which shall be at once injurious both to laity and clergy. I shall not attempt to discuss the subject completely, but there are one or two points, which may be brought before you with advantage.

First observe, that with regard to this duty of submission to those who bear spiritual rule, the great mischief has in general arisen, not from the backwardness of people to yield it, but from their too great readiness. Every one knows, that in what are called "the dark ages," the clergy had an almost unlimited sway over the people, and that the same is the case in many Roman Catholic countries in the present day; and unquestionably the clergy have very often sought this sway for merely selfish purposes, for the glory and enrichment of their own caste, for what we call purposes of priestcraft; but their readiness to assume power has not been more remarkable than that of the people to yield it; indeed if there had not been in the people a readiness to submit to priests, it would have been impossible for priests to become rulers of the people. And this same thing has been true in the case of all religions,

and not in the Church only; there has been always a readiness to acknowledge a spiritual power amongst men, and this very readiness has probably been the temptation to the priesthood to abuse their power and make it subserve their own purposes. But you will say, this has all died out, the day of submission to priests has gone by, at least in this country; the spirit of Protestantism has driven away the spirit of priestcraft. I do not think that this is at all true; of course there will be plenty of people, who will rejoice in declaring their freedom from the religious trammels of a priesthood, and there will be people who will make scorn of ministers of religion altogether,—so I should suppose that there must always have been; but amongst those, who really give any attention to religion, *is* that spirit dead, which under other circumstances led to a submission to any kind of priestly imposition? I think not: for that remarkable idolizing of religious teachers, which belongs to our own country and which is the parent of so much mischief, is (if I mistake not) akin to, if not the true descendent of, that spirit which led in former times to a blind submission to the clergy. So far as outward reverence and respect are concerned, I apprehend that we, the clergy of the present day, have very little of which to complain: of course there will

always be those, who, having no religion themselves, think it well to sneer at and despise those, who (they persuade themselves) have some worldly motive in addicting themselves to the ministry, and becoming what they are pleased to call "paid professors of religion:" but from those, who glory in their Christian name, I think we need never fear, lest we should not receive sufficient respect; we have much more cause to fear, lest, in revering the minister and the messenger, the Master who sent him should be forgotten.

What then is the form assumed by the duty under consideration, with especial reference to these times? I should say that the true way of performing the duty of submitting to spiritual pastors and masters is by attending to their words, by listening to their message and laying it to heart, and shewing by practice that the message has been laid to heart. If I might venture to quote our Lord's words as applicable to His ministers, I would say, that the same complaint may too frequently be made by us that was made by Him, "Why call ye Me Lord Lord, and *do* not the things which I say?" This I think is the danger of our times, lest religion should degenerate into mere churchgoing, mere outward service, and lose its heart and its practical power; and how easy it is to have such a religion as

this! how easy to submit to spiritual pastors and masters, if the submission consist in merely listening to their sermons, and giving our opinion upon them, and saying whether we are pleased or no! but oh, how difficult, if submission to spiritual pastors and masters consist in the doing those things, which on their Lord's behalf those spiritual pastors enjoin!

Let me add, Christian Brethren, that this duty is put on the best and surest ground in the text, where the Apostle gives as a reason why Christians should submit themselves to those who rule over them, that these watch for their souls as those who must give account. If they, who are placed over their brethren in the Church, have any unworthy aim in what they do, if they speak to please men, or if with much profession they are manifestly empty and unreal in character, then we cannot be surprised if they are without influence upon their brethren; and he, who cannot take God to witness that he watches for his brethren's souls as one who must give account, has no right to expect, that his brethren will submit themselves to him to any good purpose; but if a minister has only one aim, and that the preaching of Christ to his brethren and persuading them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God and not to be conformed to this present world, to be

Christians indeed, to make manifest in their lives the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost upon their hearts, then he may boldly urge upon them the precept of the text, and may insist upon this, that the only submission which is worthy of the name, is the submission to those precepts of holiness which as the Minister of Christ he has delivered.

Here then I leave this subject: I might have given it a much wider range: I might from the text have taken occasion to speak in general of Church authority, and of that Church discipline, the loss of which we year by year deplore in the service for Ash-Wednesday, and the restoration of which we speak of as a thing heartily to be wished: but we should have been thus led into a wide and difficult subject, not altogether suitable for a parish pulpit. Therefore I have taken one plain and easy and simple view of the subject, and I bid you apply to yourselves the words of the Church Catechism, "it is my duty to submit myself to my spiritual pastors and masters," in some such way as that which I have suggested. Are you submitting yourselves? do you think upon what you hear in this place? do you pray that you may be able to put it in practice? do you strive to bring up your conduct to the standard exhibited to you? do you listen to my words, as

those of one who watches for your souls, as having to give account? I wish I could believe from my heart, that you all came to the house of God with a spirit of submission such as this.

# SERMON XVII.

## TO ORDER MYSELF LOWLY AND REVERENTLY TO ALL MY BETTERS.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 3.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

IN speaking in my last sermon upon the duty of "submitting ourselves to all our governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters," I remarked, that this article of duty towards our neighbour had the appearance of being particularly directed to children and young persons. I endeavoured however to shew, that although beyond doubt the article in question had a very important application of this kind, yet its application was by no means restricted to the young, but belonged in a very clear way to all of us. Remarks of the same kind may be made con-

cerning that article of duty which I now intend to bring before you. The Church Catechism teaches the child to say, that it is its duty "to order itself lowly and reverently to all its betters;" and you might be disposed to think that the very form of expression here used made it plain, that the duty was one intended to be enforced upon the young,—that a child may easily speak without affectation of its "betters," meaning those who are wiser and older than itself, those who are placed over it in the character of teachers and masters, its parents, relations, friends, and the like. And I should suppose, that if in repeating the Church Catechism the child thinks at all of what it is saying, as every good teacher endeavours to make it think, the child will have no difficulty in understanding what it is saying; it will not ask, who are my betters? but a number of persons will immediately occur to its mind, to whom it perceives that according to the teaching of the Church Catechism it ought to order itself lowly and reverently,—to treat them with respect, to be humble and retiring before them, to shew by its conduct that it knows itself to be in the presence of those, to whom reverence and attention ought to be shewn. Hence therefore I by no means desire to hint, that the duty in question is not especially a duty for young persons; I fully

believe it to be so; but then, on the other hand, it can as little be doubted, that the duty has a meaning and force after the days of childhood are gone by; and therefore, in order to treat the subject completely, it will be well in the first place to deal with the duty as especially a duty for the young, and then to shew in what sense the duty remains with us, when we have put away childish things.

Now, regarding the duty especially as one for young persons, I shall content myself with making a few general observations. In the first place I will remark, that a difference may be noticed in the spirit of this duty from that of which I spoke last Sunday. We then learned that a child was to submit himself to all those who were placed over him; we now learn further, that he is to exhibit lowly and reverent conduct towards all his betters. There is a considerable difference here, as you cannot fail to perceive; for the class "all my betters" is a much larger one than that of "governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters;" these of course are all included amongst "my betters," but there are many others besides; for all those, who are in the relation to the child of teacher or the like, must have been put into that relation by a direct act of authority; they are in the place of a parent; the parent says to

the child, This person is to be your teacher, and you are to obey him as you would obey myself; and a child, who has in him anything of the spirit of obedience to parents, will see at once the duty of submitting to those, to whom the parent has passed over his own authority. But if the child should stop here, and admitting the duty of obeying those placed over him by his parents should deny all other claims upon his respect, then the clause of the Church Catechism which we are considering would condemn him: there may be no bond of obedience to any one except parents and teachers and spiritual pastors, but there is a bond of reverence and respect towards many others besides: so that we may say, that the child who performs the duty, which we are considering today, will certainly find no difficulty in performing that, which came under our notice last Sunday.

But there is another point of distinction to be noticed. Not only is the class "all my betters" more extended than that of "governors, teachers," and the rest, but the temper of mind implied in the words "to order myself lowly and reverently" is much deeper and more comprehensive, than that involved in the expression "to submit myself." A child may submit himself, because he sees no peace for his life otherwise; he may submit, because he cannot help himself; but to

order himself lowly and reverently, to cultivate that modest, gentle, retiring character of mind, which is the chief ornament of young persons, and the opposite of which is most offensive to all right-judging minds, and the almost certain prelude of failure in afterlife—*this* is a duty which can only be performed, because it is seen to *be* a duty, and it is the only solid ground for that other duty of submission to those placed over him. In fact, the young person, who habitually behaves himself with modesty and humility towards those whom he regards as "his betters," will hardly be sensible of an effort in submitting himself to those, whom it is his more definite duty to obey. And indeed if submission does not spring in this way from the heart and from inward conviction, it will be worth little; it may save a child from punishment, but it cannot easily prove to be the seed of well-regulated, manly, Christian life.

And this may lead me to observe, that the production of this fruit in manhood, this fruit of a well-ordered Christian life, is the great aim of enforcing these duties upon children. Children and young persons generally are too apt to think that duties, or what are so called, are imposed upon them, for the sake of curbing their wishes and thwarting their plans; but any one who considers the matter will perceive, that the child

himself is the real and principal gainer by the performance of his duty towards his neighbour; it makes very little difference to the child's "betters," how he may comport himself towards them, but it is of infinite importance to the child, that he should cultivate those habits of thinking and that kind of conduct, which is sure by God's blessing to cause him to be loved and honoured and respected. The gain, I say, is nearly all on the child's side; and not only is this evident from the nature of the case, but it is to be noted, that all the duties which the Church Catechism contains are taught to the child, because it was able to say, that it had been made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven;" they are not duties laid upon the back of a slave, but they are duties which gain their chief force from the fact, that the child who is to perform them has been adopted into God's own family, and is therefore entitled to know the privileges and rules of God's house.

Much more might be said upon this part of the subject; for indeed, the words, "to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters," furnish a text for an almost complete discussion of the right tone of feeling for young persons, and of the means by which that tone of feeling should be encouraged. As, however, I am anxious to

pass on to the other part of the subject, namely, the application of the duty to the case of Christians in general, I shall content myself with this one remark, that the manner in which children will perform the duty of ordering themselves lowly and reverently will depend very much upon home teaching and home example: the parents in this as in other cases, must be the real teachers; the repetition and explanation of the Church Catechism will in general do little good, if the children perceive the whole spirit of the Catechism set at nought and forgotten by their fathers and mothers; do what we may, the children will to a great extent take their tone and character from their parents; and I have sometimes observed, that, in going through a Sunday School, you may almost undertake to say what is the character of the parents by seeing and conversing with the children.

But I must pass on. I have said, that the duty of ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters, though obviously a great duty for children and in their case easily intelligible, is not for children only; and now I wish to inquire, in what way the duty applies to men and women. Here, however, the question very naturally occurs, Who *are* my betters? give me a rule for deciding who they are, and I will at

once admit the duty of ordering myself lowly and reverently towards them. The question reminds one of that which was asked by the lawyer in the Gospel, to whom our Lord gave the injunction to love his neighbour as himself: an undeniable duty,—but, who *is* my neighbour? And you will remember, that upon this question being asked, our Lord proceeded to teach in the parable of the good Samaritan the great lesson of universal brotherly love. So, in like manner, you may say with reference to the duty under discussion, Who are my betters? and I have chosen for a text a portion of Scripture, which seems to give a very good answer to the question; "Let nothing," says S. Paul, "be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves;" a passage this, I may observe, which has so much resemblance to the words of the Church Catechism, that one might almost fancy that it was in the minds of the compilers when they wrote the words, "to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters;" but whether or no, let us take S. Paul's words and see how they will help us in the practical performance of the duty, which the Church Catechism lays down. You might say at first, that S. Paul's words go too far, that they make out all men to be our betters, and that if we are to esteem others

without discrimination as better than ourselves and order ourselves lowly and reverently towards them, we must be guilty of hypocrisy and become unreal in our conduct. This, however, would be to abuse S. Paul's words: for observe in the first place, that when we speak of "our betters" we cannot mean in general those, who have been determined to be better than ourselves by some divine or human decision; the time for such decision is not yet come; there *will* be a day, when men will be rewarded according to their works, and when many who are now first shall be last and the last first, thus shewing that all human decision before that time will be liable to great mistake; therefore at present, if we do speak of persons as being better than ourselves, it must be in general according to notions which we ourselves may form; and if this be so, upon what safe principle can we go, except that which S. Paul lays down? knowing, as we do, our own sinfulness and unworthiness, knowing how much defect attaches to our best doings, how infirm we are of purpose, how forgetful of God, how neglectful of our neighbour, with what face can we venture to uphold our own excellence,—our own superiority to men, who may perhaps be thought by others inferior to ourselves? I by no means wish to encourage a sickly mawkish tone of religious feeling, leading

us to much apparently humble talk about our own unworthiness, which may be mere talk after all; but I wish to impress upon you that in thinking of any of our fellow-Christians,—any from whom we could for a moment think of taking a lesson,—the first presumption of our minds ought to be this, that they are better than ourselves; we *must* know enough evil of ourselves to prevent us from presuming the contrary; and this I apprehend is what S. Paul intended in the text; he intended to mark this as emphatically the *Christian* tone of mind, to be in the habit of thinking in a lowly manner of ourselves, and regarding others as our betters.

In endeavouring to interpret the word "betters" by the language of S. Paul in the text, I am of course not denying that there may be in certain cases a more particular and definite sense attached to the word. We may, in the providence of God, stand in a relation towards some of our fellowmen, which may make it fitting that we should regard them as our betters, without reference to the question of their being superior to us in spiritual attainments. Thus, for example, we all stand in such a relation to the Queen, and are bound to order ourselves lowly and reverently accordingly. Sons and daughters stand in such a relation towards their parents,

long after they have grown out of childhood; indeed this tie of blood can never be broken by anything but death, and a parent has always a title of respect even when he has ceased to require obedience. So again, perhaps we should not be wrong in including in the term "betters," those upon whom we are in any way dependent in the providence of God, as masters in relation to servants. Nor would I even exclude from the notion of betters those divisions and orders in society, which arise from the difference of gifts and advantages afforded by God to different men; when persons are placed in a position of preeminence, either by inherited or acquired wealth, or by the gift of great natural talents, or by any other means, then I think that the whole body of the people are benefited, when they look upon such persons with respect and not with envy, when they order themselves lowly and reverently towards them, and not discontentedly and rudely. All these,—and I dare say there are many more,—all these are particular examples of the application of the term "betters" to some of our fellows; but I pass them over on this occasion, because I wish rather to lead you to the consideration of the general Christian principle which S. Paul enforces in the text, and to exhort you

to find in his words the truest and best answer to the question, Who are my betters?

S. Paul gives us then this rule, "in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves;" and in order that we may see the full force of the rule, let us consider for a moment the tendency natural to men in comparing themselves with others: what is it? beyond doubt this—the tendency to depreciate others, and exalt ourselves. To prove this, it is only necessary to hold five minutes' conversation with the generality of men; listen to a man's account of his method of transacting business; scrupulous integrity goes through the whole of it, he is careful concerning his duties, attentive to the wants and comforts of those depending upon him, in fact he is in every way what you would wish him to be; but you find that there are few other persons like himself. Now I do not wish to exaggerate this view, nor to deny that in a large number of cases the spirit of Christ has corrected this spirit of the world; but I say that this *is* the spirit of the world, the tendency of man's fallen nature, and that it is this to which S. Paul's maxim is opposed. S. Paul would teach us in all cases to make great allowance for others, and to judge ourselves, to consider how many things there may be which may give us a wrong im-

pression of our neighbour's conduct, to have open eyes for all that is good and not to be too sharp-sighted as to apparent defects. This is to be the principle of making our estimate, and so far as our present subject is concerned the practical result is to be this, that we are in this way to find those whom we may reverence and imitate. We may of course make allowance for those whom we cannot by any means take as models; we are bound in Christian charity to believe all things and to hope all things concerning the weakest of our brethren, but we may do this in cases in which real respect is out of the question; yet I would have you to observe, that no one knows how many there are, whom he can with the most hearty earnestness regard as his betters, and order himself lowly and reverently towards them, and honour them as setting forth the likeness of Christ, and follow them as true guides in the road to heaven, until he has set himself to search for them in simplicity and honesty and earnestness. Thanks to God, in this, as in all ages of the Church, and in this, as in all countries in which the Gospel has been received, you may find bright examples of the manner in which Christ's image is formed in the hearts of men, and how the Holy Spirit transforms and renews and sanctifies the elect people of God: and oh, Christian Brethren,

when you do meet with a bright instance of this kind, when you find perhaps all the highest and most difficult Christian virtues flourishing in a cottage, which you might pass by without thought or remark, how really present the power of Christ seems! what a volume of practical Christian evidences you have in such a life! how natural and easy it seems to order oneself lowly and reverently in the presence of those, who, having learned to be like Christ, may be said in the truest sense to have "received their patent of nobility direct from Almighty God!"

Let me observe in conclusion, that to search, as we pass through this world, for traces of the effect produced by the teaching and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, for marks of the work of the Holy Spirit, and, when we see those traces and marks in any one, to be ready in lowliness of mind to esteem him as better than ourselves, and to imitate what we admire in him, and learn to see in others a mirror to shew us our own deficiencies, is a duty in more ways than one. In one sense, it is a duty towards him whom we regard as our better; but of this I say nothing. It is a duty to ourselves too; for this is the true way to grow in grace, and to correct that tendency to self-sufficiency and self-glorification which is the very curse of our fallen nature. It is a duty

moreover to Christ Himself; because it is only right that loving Him and following Him, as we profess to do, we should gladly recognise every print that we can find of His sacred footsteps in this fallen world. But it is especially a duty towards our neighbours in general; it is due to them, that if we have the eye to discover what is beautiful and good we should shew by our conduct, how much we reverence it, and so lead others to reverence it too. Who can say what amount of good a man may not do in his generation, by determining that he will not give way to merely worldly maxims, will not bow down his head to those idols which the world sets up, but that he will in lowliness of mind seek wherever he goes for that which is pure and Christlike and true, and reverence nothing human in the whole world besides?

## SERMON XVIII.

### TO HURT NOBODY BY WORD OR DEED.

GENESIS iv. 9.

And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?

THE conduct of Cain towards Abel gives us the first example in the history of the world of a flagrant breach of a man's duty towards his neighbour. Early as this occurred in history, I am not sure that it was the very first example of a breach of the duty; I suspect that if we were to analyse the history of the Fall, we should find, that it contained an offense against man as well as against God, that in fact it illustrated our Lord's description of the two great commandments, namely, that the second is like unto the first. But, however this may be, certainly the conduct of Cain towards his brother affords the first example in history of a palpable and monstrous breach

of the duty in question; and the manner in which sin thus developed itself almost immediately into its full proportions, shewing itself a very giant in the cradle, the murder of a brother being the first recorded event after the loss of Paradise, and the manner in which this sin against a brother rose out of sin against God, would make the whole history of Cain and Abel a most useful groundwork for a sermon upon sin in general, and upon sin against a neighbour in particular.

But I am not going to take this wide view of the history. The point, to which I desire to call your attention, is the manner in which Cain answered the Lord, when the question was asked of him, "Where is thy brother?" The answer manifestly involved a lie; because, when he answered, "I know not," he of course knew perfectly well what had become of Abel; and it is not matter for surprise, that a man who would slay his brother would tell a lie to conceal his fault; I should suppose that never was there a murderer yet, who was not a liar too; and so he, of whom our Lord speaks as being "a murderer from the beginning," is also described by our Lord as "a liar and the father of it." So that Cain's pretence, that he did not know where Abel was, will not require much remark; the remainder of his reply to the Lord is more worthy

of our attention. For here he puts in a general plea, why he should not be called upon to answer questions about his brother; "Am I my brother's keeper?" says Cain—why do you ask me about him? what is it to me, whether he be here or there? I can answer for myself, but not for him. There was a certain plausibility in this way of putting the case; the old serpent, who was more subtle than all the beasts of the field which the Lord had made, had imparted some of his subtilty to his disciple; and if we had not read the previous part of the history, and had been in ignorance of the fact of the murder, we might have been disposed to say, that Cain's answer was reasonable, that he was not responsible for Abel. Of course, as things actually were, the reply was grossly hypocritical; it was abominable that a man should appeal to Almighty God whether he was his brother's keeper, when he had just murdered that brother: but putting the hypocrisy out of the question, I say that there was something of plausibility in the excuse, which Cain made for not giving an account of Abel.

And that this is so is proved by the fact, that Cain's language has been taken up and used by men with reference to their brethren down to the present time; strong as were the lessons which Christ gave of the weakness and wickedness of

the excuse, and thoroughly opposed as it is to the whole spirit of His kingdom, still even now the principle of action, which depends upon the indignant inquiry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" has by no means died out. In fact it is not likely to die out, because it is one of the most comfortable principles, which the selfishness of man's heart can devise; it enables us to look without concern upon any description of wretchedness, to keep our money in our purses, to consult our own quiet and ease, to free ourselves from a great amount of pain and trouble and anxiety, and however much evil we may see to allow it to take its own course under the notion that it is no affair of ours—are we our brother's keeper? Christ says, Yes indeed you are, you are all brethren, and are all responsible for each other; Christ says so, but the selfishness of our corrupt hearts says, No; and hence I fear, that as long as the world lasts, there will always be those who will repeat and act upon the words of Cain.

Now my reason for alluding to Cain's pretended views of his duty towards his neighbour is this, that I am going to direct your attention to that portion of our duty as laid down in the Church Catechism, which is expressed by the words "to hurt nobody by word or deed." If I were to go about to prove the reality of this duty, I should

clearly waste your time; I should suppose that even Cain knew perfectly well the reality of the duty, and that he had grievously broken it, whether he were his brother's keeper or not; I shall not therefore take up your time by proving the reality of the duty; nor yet shall I enter into details concerning the manner in which our neighbour may be hurt by words or deeds of ours, because I shall be led to this part of the subject more distinctly hereafter; but I shall take a general view of our relation to each other, upon which the strength of the duty depends, and shall endeavour to shew you, that the duty may be broken through more easily than we think, and that the breach is very likely to be protected by the plea set up by Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

And in order to introduce this view, let me call your attention to the manner, in which men very often support the purity of their characters: they say, that "they are sure they have never done any one any harm;" that is, in the language of the Church Catechism, they have "hurt nobody by word or deed." It is on very solemn occasions too, that this defense is set up; I suppose that it is the general salve to the conscience of careless people, who are using their lives here for mere pleasure and frivolity; I suppose that

almost all such persons would tell you that they are doing no harm; and this is not to be wondered at, because every one who does what is foolish and short-sighted must have some way of justifying himself, otherwise he would hardly act in a foolish and short-sighted way; and this plea that he is doing no one any harm is the simplest and most plausible that can be set up, and therefore many men adopt it, and no wonder. But it is used upon much more solemn occasions; it is often the Gospel which a man preaches to his soul upon his death-bed; he lives upon it, and so he is compelled to die upon it; he persuades himself it is true while he is in health, and sickness sometimes does not persuade him to the contrary; it is a poor stay for a human soul in the prospect of judgment, at the very best; I mean, that even if it were true, a man would shew great spiritual blindness and ignorance, who comforted himself with this alone in the prospect of meeting God; for, even if a man had done no one any harm, this would not shew that he was pure in the sight of God; and moreover, he who had been thus irreproachable in the performance of his duty towards his neighbour would be the first to perceive the great depths of the law of God, and to declare himself an unprofitable servant, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" So that even if a man lying in the

quiet of a sick-room, and reviewing his life, could think of no instance in which he had hurt his neighbour by word or deed, he would still be wrong in depending upon this as his passport to the kingdom of Heaven. But is it likely to be true that a man,—even the best of men,—has never hurt his neighbour by word or deed? Many men think so, and there is much to strengthen them in their belief; it is the commonest thing in the world to hear the most loose and ungodly lives excused upon this plea, that such an one was after all a good kind of man and never did any one any harm; I say then, let us look for a moment at this notion of doing no one any harm and see what it is worth, how far it will bear examination, and whether it does not really depend upon the old excuse of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Now the almost impossibility, that any one of us should keep blameless the law of duty towards our neighbour, which forbids us to hurt any one by word or deed, will appear at once, if we consider the case of persons, who are not bound together by any special ties. Of course, in such cases as that of the relation of father to son, or son to father, of husband to wife, or wife to husband, of master to servant, or servant to master,—in any of these simple and plain relations,

there are as simple and plain duties, and he who does not entirely perform those duties is guilty of hurting his neighbour either by word or deed, or by both; and I imagine that there are few persons, who, honestly looking back upon the manner in which they have performed their duties in any one of these relations, would say, I have performed them completely, quite to my own satisfaction, if I had my time over again there is no change that I would desire to make; few persons, I apprehend, would take this ground; yet there may be some; and though it is no part of my present plan to attack their position, I would remind them, that in all these relations there are sins of omission as well as of commission, that our neighbour may be hurt by leaving things undone which would be for his good, as much as by actively doing things which are to his harm, and that therefore a person who would thoroughly acquit himself must be sure, that he has left nothing undone, which was reasonably within his power, for the temporal or spiritual benefit of those with whom he is especially connected. But this I do not dwell upon; I pass by special relations which have their special duties, and take the case in which a man is the least likely to commit a breach of his duty towards his neighbour, and consider each man with reference to those

round about him, those amongst whom he lives, those whom he meets in society, those who see his deeds and hear his words; has he hurt any of *them* by word or deed? This is the question which we have to consider at present.

And the answer to the question depends upon that truth of which we have heard from our childhood, and which is not the less important on that account, namely, the force of example. I have often laid stress upon this truth, as indeed every minister of Christ must lay stress upon it; Christ Himself laid very great stress upon it, when He told His disciples, that whosoever should break one of the least of the commandments and teach men so should be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven, and that whosoever should do and teach them should be called great: *how* teach? not I presume by lecturing upon the commandments, and explaining that there were some of them so trifling that men need not trouble themselves about keeping them,—this was not the kind of teaching I apprehend of which the Lord was afraid; it was teaching by example to which He pointed, it was the neglecting to keep God's commandments and so leading others to think them small and not necessary to be kept, against which the Lord gave warning. And every one must be aware, that this *is* the great source of influence

in the world; men can forget sermons easily enough, or sleep through them, or not apply them to themselves, but they cannot neglect example; at least, they *do* not neglect it; they follow one another by a kind of instinct, and when in our confession before God we compare ourselves to sheep, we describe perhaps only too accurately the manner in which we all in the matter of sin keep together in a flock, and the readiness with which a whole herd will break through the fences of God's commandments, when one has been found bold enough to lead the way. Hence it is, that the actions of each of us tell so much for evil or for good upon our neighbours; hence it is, that the notion of having never done any one any harm is generally so pitiable and so false; hence the absurdity of a man thinking that at worst his sins are his own affair; and hence the reason why if he be asked, "Where is thy brother?" he may not answer, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—the truth being, that any plea which would justify this view of the matter would justify a man in saying, that it was his own affair whether he had an infectious fever or not, whether he had his children vaccinated or not, whether or not he allowed upon his premises any source of disease. In all such cases as these the law of the land steps in, where it is possible, and says

"You *are* your brother's keeper," and you shall not do that which may do him harm: and the law of God looks with the like feeling upon moral and religious diseases, nuisances, sources of fever; all moral diseases are contagious, and every man who has any such disease upon him hurts his neighbour whether he intend it or no.

All this is, I apprehend, quite undeniable, and there are many cases in which we should not question its application. Every one knows, for instance, that in a school one thoroughly bad boy is a pest to the whole body. So also, when a young man gives himself up to pleasure and debauchery, I think we all see the hollowness and emptiness of the excuse that he is no one's enemy but his own; we all see that a person of this kind is a public enemy, a source of corruption throughout a neighbourhood, a thorough missionary of the kingdom of darkness; and though the pretence may be made that such a person has not done any one any harm, the pretence is (I conceive) too foolish to deserve serious notice. So also, if a person being in a position of high influence palpably neglects the duties belonging to his station, it is manifest that he is not performing his duty towards his neighbours, that he is hurting many of them, if not by flagrant sins of commission, at all events by as flagrant

sins of omission. This is all clear enough: but I should wish not to let the matter rest here, but rather to endeavour to shew by a simple example or two, that the question of hurting our neighbour by word or deed comes much nearer home to many of us, and that many a man may be committing the sin without intending it, and even without being aware that he *is* committing it.

I shall give you two examples; one of word, and one of deed. I confine myself to two, partly for the sake of being brief, but partly also because two remembered will be sufficient.

First then, how can I hurt my neighbour by word? Of course I can do so by speaking ill of him, by backbiting and slander, and the like; but all this is foreign to our present subject; how can I hurt him in the way of example, by that influence which (as I have said) each man has over his fellows? I can do so by any sin of the tongue whatever: a sin of the tongue is injurious to a man himself, as S. James very forcibly reminds us, but it does not stop there: it injures other people as well: a man allows his temper to get the better of him, and instead of turning away wrath by a soft answer uses angry language, and so injures those about him; the benefit of a good example is lost, and the evil of a bad one ensured. Or a man uses the name of God lightly and thinks

but little of it; and yet even if the duty of hallowing God's name *were* small, yea the least of all duties, still if he teaches others (as undoubtedly he will) to forget this small duty, he comes under the heavy condemnation of Jesus Christ. Or a person speaks lightly of solemn things, and it may be ruins his neighbour's feelings of reverence when he least intended it. In fact, the very danger of the tongue is its power; it does much more than we intend it to do; we speak but a few thoughtless words, and perhaps do by them such mischief to our neighbours, as may not be repaired for years.

Secondly, how can I hurt my neighbour by deed? In a hundred ways, in virtue of the force of example, but I will notice only one; and the one that I select is chosen, because it may seem a small matter but is really an important one. I will refer then to our mode of attending upon the public worship of God: it is no easy thing to comport ourselves altogether as we ought in the solemn presence of Almighty God; it requires a fulness of the sense of the majesty of God, of His mercy in allowing us to approach Him, of our condition as redeemed creatures in Jesus Christ, and as members of a Church sanctified by the Holy Ghost, which it is difficult always to hold secure: and I think that most Christians will often have

to grieve over their shortcomings in this respect, and will be compelled to admit that it is their own infirmity that they have not in the worship of God always that sense of His presence, which they would wish to have: but I am now speaking of their conduct so far as it is visible to the eye of others, and I say, that any behaviour which argues in the most remote degree a spirit of carelessness or irreverence, any want of compliance with the rules of public worship, such as sitting and looking about when they ought to be kneeling, or whispering when they ought to be listening, any wandering of the eye about the church, any "plaiting of the hair or putting on of apparel" for the purpose of show or beyond what Christian modesty permits—that any such manner of dealing with public worship is to hurt our neighbour by deed,—not to insult God only, nor to make Him angry with ourselves only,—but to hurt our neighbour, to interfere with his devotions, to put a stumbling-block in his way, to lead the young and the weak into error.

Here then I leave this subject: I have given as I promised two examples, but I wish them to suggest to you all the numberless ways, in which we may, if we be not on our guard, and if we do not make a conscience of our conduct, hurt our neighbour both by word and deed. Who,

I would ask, has not thus hurt his neighbour at some period of his life? who is there that is making his example tell all on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ and His kingdom, and not at all on the side of the world? there may be such; there are some, I know, who strive to keep this end before them and pray God to enable them more and more to attain it; I fear they are the few, and that they ever will be so; but whether few or many, let each person amongst ourselves consider his own ways, and ask himself whether it is his great and constant effort not to hurt his neighbour either by word or by deed.

# SERMON XIX.

## TO BE TRUE AND JUST IN ALL MY DEALINGS.

S. John, xviii. 37, 38.

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.
Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?

The point of duty, which comes under our notice to-day, is expressed by the words, "to be true and just in all my dealings;" and I have chosen the passage, which I have just now read to you, as a text upon which to base a sermon concerning this duty, because I wish to take occasion from it to observe the manner in which Christ our Lord has most effectually taught His disciples the duties, which they have to perform as His disciples. Christ did not merely reason out the importance of certain kinds of conduct, and enforce them by argument; nor did He excel other teachers chiefly in the exactness, with which He

laid down for His followers the list of their duties and the proper line of their conduct. I do not of course mean that His teaching was not very striking to those who heard it; unquestionably it was; we read that the people were astonished at His doctrine, because "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes"; He did not speak to the people (I suppose) as a mere matter of routine, as though He were appointed to preach to them on the Sabbath-day, and the Sabbath-day being come His sermon must come too; there was nothing listless, and stiff, and formal, in His mode of teaching; but He spoke plainly and to the point, as a man would speak who felt that He had much that was important to say, and only a short time in which to say it. Then again, there was in the teaching of our blessed Lord a character of solemnity and weight which *we* can recognise, who have the opportunity of reading His words, although we cannot hear Him speak them; His warnings are so simple, so intelligible to every one, and so hard to forget; they go to the heart and stay there; they touch the conscience, if it is not altogether seared.

All this will be quite familiar to you, and I might (if my subject required) say a great deal more, in order to bring before your minds the full force and character of our Lord's teaching: but

I wish rather to make you perceive at this time, that however forcible and weighty that teaching by His own mouth might be, the influence of our Lord in teaching the world has been much more extended; and if any one should put together merely those duties which Christ Himself inculcated, and then say, That is a complete account of the teaching of Christ, he would mistake the matter altogether. For instance; how very little was said in His teaching concerning speaking the truth; and yet what lesson has in fact been more thoroughly taught to mankind? and what lesson was there, that they more needed to be taught than this? If you ask, *how* did Christ teach it? the text will tell us,—"For this end was I born," said Christ, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth: every one that is of the truth heareth My voice;" so that the whole life of our Lord had been a lesson concerning truth, and it was not one particular lesson which He spoke, nor any number of lessons, but the whole character and complexion of His life, which formed the great testimony for the truth: anything that was hollow, or hypocritical, or untrue, would not be against any one law which Christ had laid down,—as, with a Jew, to break the Sabbath would be against the fourth commandment, and to swear falsely would be

against the third, and so on—but the whole character of Christ's preaching, and ministry, and example, would rise in judgment against any one of His disciples, who should venture upon any conduct contrary to the truth.

I remark this the rather, because it is one of the most important distinctions of the teaching of Christ from all other teaching: there is a life in His teaching, which belongs to that of no other man, who ever yet came into the world; and the force of it increases as years roll on, and verifies in a remarkable manner that character which the Lord attributed to His own words, when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Let me illustrate this by a very striking instance; it is that of slavery: taking the mere letter of the Scripture, persons have maintained that it sanctions slavery, that the inspired writers never condemn it, that S. Paul distinctly sent back Onesimus the runaway slave to his master; and this kind of argument is still maintained in some parts of the world, as we very well know; and yet, how thoroughly has the spirit of the religion of Christ supplied any apparent deficiency in the letter, and made men feel that whatever abstinence there may be from a condemnation of slavery in Scripture, (for which probably good reasons can be given,) the

whole principle of slavery is condemned by the spirit of Christ's Gospel! and in our own country this spirit has gained the victory, and taught us to make a great national sacrifice in order to do away with a great national sin.

This is the difference then between the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and all other teaching. He impresses upon His followers a certain spirit and character, and then the details are easily filled up by His disciples themselves. And so with regard to the duty, which we are now considering—"to be true and just in all my dealings"—is this a duty? surely,—a duty for every Christian, you cannot interpret it too comprehensively,—in *all* my dealings,—not those which come under the eye of man only, but in them all, the most private and secret and those in which there is the most temptation to be untrue and unjust: and if you ask why? that is, why is all this a duty? the answer is, that no disciple of Christ can rightly ask the question; the duty is so completely one of the very essence of Christianity, that to question it would be felt by every Christian to be a blot upon his Christian character.

Now then let me say a few words upon the duty itself. And first let me observe upon it as peculiarly a duty towards our *neighbour*. Of course, anything like untruth or injustice is wrong

in itself, and therefore wrong towards ourselves; all that maketh a lie is especially noted in the Book of Revelation as being cast into the lake of fire; and no wonder, seeing that the fire is for the devil and his works, and that lies are his work above all other things; the first thing that Satan did in the history of the world was to lie and to deceive our parents by his lie, and therefore our Lord speaks of him as the father of lying; and hence (as I have said) to do anything untruthful or unjust, anything mean and deceitful or dishonourable, is to sin against ourselves, to make ourselves liable to God's anger. But we are just now considering such sins specially as sins against our neighbour, and therefore I wish you chiefly so to contemplate them, and to perceive that they are of the worst species of sin. For the whole frame of society stands by mutual confidence; knaves sometimes seem to prosper in the world, but it is only because they are supposed to be honest, and because on the whole we are obliged to trust in each other as being honest; if the belief in truthfulness and honesty as the general characteristics of mankind were entirely done away, the earth would scarcely be habitable, the bonds of society would be broken. There is therefore perhaps no duty towards our neighbour, which it is more important to enforce than this;

and the more so, because it is one, of the breach of which human laws can frequently take no cognisance; murder, and such like open breaches of our duty to our brethren, human law can look to and avenge, and therefore such sins are not those, upon the consideration of which a Christian minister can most profitably spend his time: no—it is the more hidden duties, the breach of which human law cannot punish, the breach of which may in fact be sometimes entirely concealed from our neighbour, which it is most important to enforce. And if any one should think, that a Christian minister need hardly lay much stress upon such a duty as that of which I am now speaking, that it is better to preach only the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and leave it to the spirit of the Gospel to cause the minor duties of the Christian life to be attended to, I would say, that, although I should never hope to see a man true and just in all his dealings, unless his heart had been truly moved by the influence of the Gospel, I yet believe that even the purest of Christians may find advantage, from having their minds called especially to such a duty as this: for oftentimes men do not consider sufficiently the wide-spreading character of the duties which are incumbent upon them, and the manner in which their Christian profession renders it of the highest

importance that even in the discharge of the commonest duties they should make their light to shine before men.

Let then any Christian consider with himself, whether in the judgment of his own conscience he seems to himself to have been habitually true and just in all his dealings: let him consider how extensive that phrase is, "*all* his dealings,"—not those only which come under the eye of the world, but those which none other knows but himself and God; would the transactions of all men, who are considered decent respectable men, really pass muster, if they could be thoroughly brought into daylight and examined? Is it not a frequent complaint, that men, of whom you could not expect it, are found guilty of dealings, which cannot be called true and just? Are we not sometimes amazed to find, what actions are committed by those whom we call respectable persons, without any trouble apparently on the part of their own consciences?

I only throw out these hints, in order that any one may take them up and use them who may think them useful; though I am of course aware, that any one to whom they may be most valuable will probably be the last to think so; this however I cannot help. But without pressing this matter further I will beg you to observe, how the ex-

pression "all my dealings" recognises the fact that religious duty—our duty as Christians—does descend into all our dealings; I can never impress upon you too often, that this is the very character of the Christian religion, that it does not belong merely to Sunday and to Church, that it is not a mere system of praying or reading the Bible, or hearing sermons, or receiving the Sacrament at certain times, but that it is an influence upon the every-day life, an influence causing all actions to be done in the fear of God, sanctifying the shop, leavening the laws, purifying the crowd, governing the daily thoughts; and the truth and just dealings of a Christian must be those, which are produced by a continual sense of the presence of God, and a continual desire to imitate the example of Christ, and to adorn the Christian profession.

Let me however endeavour to reduce the duty in question a little more nearly to practice by one or two illustrations. The first shall be one, which I perhaps should not have taken, if it had not been for the purpose of supplying something like an omission which I made in my last sermon. I was then (as you will remember) speaking of the duty of not hurting our neighbour by word or deed; and I purposely omitted to say anything of such sins as backbiting and slander, because they

will come more properly under another head; but there is a way of hurting our neighbour by word, which might then have been mentioned and which I will introduce now, because it is one which will only be avoided by being true and just in all our dealings. The way of hurting our neighbour, to which I allude, is that of flattery; flattery is seldom *true*, and it is never *just;* he who flatters his neighbour, you remember, is said to spread a net for his feet; very generally the flatterer has some end of his own to gain, it is a mode of practising upon his neighbour's weakness, and is done for some selfish purpose, and then of course it is doubly evil; but even if this be not the case, regard for our brother, respect for his character, regard for his true interest, ought to refrain the tongue from saying anything but what is true, even though it be in his praise; and generally it is better even to avoid that. It is much more real kindness to tell a person of his faults; it may be difficult to do so discreetly, and it may generally be safer to say nothing; but certainly, every wise man will speak of him as his best friend, who, having observed any defect in his character, has contrived in Christian love to tell him of the same.

But again, I would say, that this duty of being true and just in all our dealings applies very par-

ticularly to the dealings of persons with those, who are dependent upon them, or who are unable from any cause to resent an injury done to them. A master for instance is unreasonable towards his servants, shews ill temper, or undue suspicion, or want of estimation of their services; and they have on their part no means of making him sensible of his unreasonable conduct; and on this very account it becomes a Christian to be careful, lest he should appear to be unreasonable, to do towards his servants what is just and equal, knowing that he also has a Master in Heaven. The same kind of remark applies in cases where there is no bond such as that of service, but merely a difference of social position: thus a man may conduct himself proudly and haughtily towards his poorer neighbours, and leave many things undone which he might do for them, and cause them to curse him in their hearts, and yet do nothing contrary to human law; and this is precisely the conduct, from which he should be restrained by the fear of God and his profession as a Christian; for the law of man and the law of Christ, though they may run side by side, do not end together.

And, once more, the same kind of remark applies to the relation of parents to children, and generally of older persons to quite young ones. Oh, how much is there frequently un-

reasonable in the conduct of parents, how frequently temper is allowed to be the spring of action, how often do they neglect to estimate aright a child's motives and meaning—and what is the consequence? the children lose their confidence in the wisdom and justice of their parents; and the children suffer thereby; they lose the guidance which their youth requires; they become wayward and disobedient, because the parents were thoughtless and inconsiderate. There can, I am convinced, be no better rule for a parent in his dealings towards his children, than that of being true and just in them all.

Another way, in which we should take good heed to be true and just, is that of estimating liberally and fairly and in a Christian spirit the conduct of our neighbour. It is not just to suppose, that people always act from bad motives, except when we can prove the contrary: Christian charity, you will remember, hopes all things: and though Christian charity will consequently in this wicked world be often deceived, still it is better to be deceived, than not to hope the best: and though I am aware, that a great deal of conduct does spring from selfishness, and that in fact very little human conduct will bear close examination and careful sifting, still it is painful to observe the tendency that is too frequently mani-

fested to take the worst view of things, to fancy motives, to suspect the worst. This is not true nor just, certainly it is not Christian.

And as I alluded just now to the case of children, and as the Church Catechism is one intended to be learned and repeated by children, allow me to impress upon such of you as it may chiefly concern, the importance of insisting upon this in the earliest education of children, as one of the most important things that can be insisted upon. Whatever portions of the Catechism you allow your children to forget, do not allow them to forget to be true and just in all their dealings—truthful in the smallest matters—honest and honourable in the veriest trifles. Depend upon it, there is nothing upon which their future character and happiness and usefulness more depend: even in a worldly point of view truth and honesty are a mine of wealth, and the absence of these qualities is wretchedness and beggary. And two things may be specially noted: first, that the lesson of which I am speaking in this sermon will scarcely ever be learned to good purpose, if it is not learned in childhood; and secondly, that it can hardly be expected to be learned then, unless it is exhibited in the practice of those, to whom children look up for example. If children will not copy what is good in their parents, they will

at least seldom be found slow to copy what is evil; and if the conduct of parents be not true and just, what will that of the children be? Oh, if there be any one thing more dreadful than another to think upon, it is perhaps the awful reckoning, which they will have to discharge, who have received children as a gift from God, and who by their own evil ways have led those children into the ways of sin!

But I must bring my remarks to a close. I have given you a few illustrations, which might be increased indefinitely, of the manner in which the duty of being true and just in all our dealings applies to common life: and now I have only two observations to make further. In the first place, I would have you to make it a part of your regular and systematic examination of your own lives and conduct, whether or to what extent you have performed or are performing this duty: I would have you to do this, because I think you will perceive from what I have said, that it is one, concerning which there may easily be an immense amount of self-deception; and yet it is one, which above all others it behoves us to keep whole and undefiled as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And secondly, I would say, that if we are thoroughly penetrated by the spirit of Christ's religion, it will shew itself in such ways as this;

I mean, that it is by descending to the affairs of common life, by hallowing our smallest and simplest actions, that the religion of Christ really shews its power, and that it is proved that we are new creatures, that the old things have passed away and all things become new. The man, who is a Christian in name, may be decent in such things as come chiefly before the world; but the Christian indeed is true and just in *all* his dealings, whether men see those dealings, or whether they be seen only by God.

# SERMON XX.

## TO BEAR NO MALICE NOR HATRED IN MY HEART.

S. Matthew v. 21, 22.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

The spirit of these words is well illustrated by those of the verse which goes immediately before them. In that verse our Lord tells His disciples, that unless their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven; and the force of this declaration by our Lord is understood at once, when we consider what the defect of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was; it was a righteousness of the letter

not of the spirit, a righteousness of external performance not of internal purity, a righteousness which would allow a man to persuade himself that he was keeping the law when he was evading the duties it imposed by wretched shifts and subterfuges,—it was a righteousness of this kind, with the general character of which we are so familiar from reading our Lord's denunciations of it, which is spoken of in the verse before the text as "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees." And our Lord declares, that the righteousness of His disciples must exceed this, must be of a different and better kind, deeper in its principles, more genuine in its character. Unless this be so they could not enter into the kingdom of Heaven, they could not follow Him in deed and in truth, they could not take Him for their example and become like Him, who hated such false righteousness from His inmost soul and ever protested against it.

Now I have said, that the words of the text, in which our Lord comments upon the old commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," are well illustrated by the words of the preceding verse of which I have just spoken. The tendency of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was to contract the commands of God within the narrowest limits possible, to say they *only* mean this,

or they *only* mean that; and our Lord having laid down the general principle of the rotten foundation of such righteousness may be regarded as now illustrating His principle by some examples; and what could be better for a first example than that of the command not to kill, or as we have it in the ordinary form of the Ten Commandments, Thou shalt do no murder? This would be a good example, because the sin forbidden would be perhaps of all the catalogue of sins the one least likely to be committed in the letter and most likely to be committed in the spirit, the command of which the sin was a breach the easiest of all to keep according to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the most difficult to keep according to the righteousness of Christ. For take the commandment in its bare literal meaning, and who is likely to break it? scarcely one in a million; it is a command chiefly useful for very rude and barbarous people; and certainly, persons such as the Scribes and Pharisees would consider it quite unnecessary, that the guilt of murder should be proved to them by argument, or pressed upon their consciences. And yet, when the command comes to be interpreted by Christ and expanded by Him to its full proportions, what a comprehensive command it seems to be! how many Scribes and Pharisees had

broken it every day of their lives, when they had least thought of it, and were perhaps thanking God that in this as in other respects they were not as other men! nay how many amongst ourselves may possibly have done the same, and yet may never have called our sin to remembrance, when we have heard the command recited, and have joined in the response "Lord have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law!"

The great doctrine then which is preached by our blessed Saviour in the text is this, that the law "Thou shalt not kill" is violated in its spirit by him, who is angry with his brother without a cause, or who (in the language of the Church Catechism) bears against his neighbour "any malice or hatred in his heart." Hence in deducing from the Ten Commandments our duty towards our neighbour, the Church Catechism is quite right in giving this as the interpretation of the law against murder: it would have been comparatively useless to have taught a child to say, My duty towards my neighbour is not to kill him; a child in almost any days, and certainly in these days, would reasonably consider, that the teacher was wasting his time in imposing upon him a duty so plain, and upon the breach of which even the law of the land had put the sentence of punishment by a shameful death; but no child could

consider, if it thought at all upon the subject, that it was unnecessary to give warning against the danger of bearing malice and hatred,—bearing them too in the heart, that hidden storehouse of evil, if not cleansed and refurnished by the Holy Spirit; every child, and still more every grown person, must feel, that this is one of the great temptations to evil with which he has to contend, that it is easy to talk of loving others as ourselves and easy to acknowledge the duty and to feel the obligation of it in our inmost souls, but that practically there are circumstances continually occurring, which tend to make us forget the necessity of loving others as ourselves, and introduce the temptation to malice and hatred.

But before proceeding further, let me say a few words concerning the manner in which our Lord in the text expounds the subject upon which I am speaking; and this I think it necessary to do, because it is possible that the language which He uses may to some occasion a difficulty. Our Lord's words are these: "I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Now it might perhaps be gathered from these words,

that our Lord distinguished amongst three different sins: first, that of being angry with a brother without a cause; secondly, that of saying to him Raca, a word of reproach or contempt; thirdly, that of saying, Thou fool: and it might be supposed that these were represented as successively greater sins, each than that which went before it, and that a corresponding punishment was allotted to each; first, the judgment; secondly, the council; thirdly, hell fire. Such however does not seem to be our Lord's meaning; and not only so, but to read His words in this sense seems in a very great degree to obscure their meaning, because it introduces the notion that there is a difference between one way of shewing hatred and another, which is the very thing against which He seems to be directing His words. The meaning of the passage may perhaps be better understood thus: the three dangers of which Christ speaks, namely, the judgment, the council, and hell fire, refer to the courts in which a great sin would be investigated amongst the Jews, and the punishment which would be inflicted if the sin were proved; suppose a man to have been accused of murder, then he would be in danger of the judgment and of the council, and if proved to be a murderer he would be rightly slain himself, and his body cast out into that valley of Hinnom,

which is referred to in the word which we translate hell fire. Now, however difficult it may be for us to understand in an English version what is meant by the words judgment, council, and hell fire, the Jews to whom our Lord spoke would at once understand the language which He used; and when He told them, that he, who was angry with his brother without a cause and who shewed the malice and hatred in his heart by the abusive words of his mouth, was in danger of the judgment, of the council, and of hell fire, they would understand Him to assert, in the most forcible manner possible, that malice and hatred were in His eyes, and in the eyes of God, equivalent to murder, murder in the seed, murder complete in thought but undeveloped in act. The notion therefore, that there is some peculiar malignity in the word which we translate "Thou fool," and that the use of this word renders a person in danger of hell, in a manner which is not true of malice and hatred in the heart,—this notion is not only altogether unfounded, but it is contrary to the whole spirit of our Lord's doctrine: it is the spirit not the letter with which Christ deals, the thoughts and intents of the heart, not merely the words of the mouth, which make men hateful in His sight, and render them obnoxious to the wrath of God.

The law, Thou shalt not kill, becomes then in the kingdom of Christ this much more comprehensive law, Thou shalt not be angry with thy brother without a cause, or Thou shalt not bear any malice or hatred in thy heart. Now let me offer you a few remarks upon this evangelical interpretation of the law, to which our consciences must all assent as being right and good. And first let me remark, that however obvious it may seem that our Lord's mode of interpreting the commandments is the right one, and that which we will call the mode of the Scribes and Pharisees the wrong one, still people do now as ever console and deceive themselves by adopting the latter kind of interpretation. What I mean is this: you find continually that people, in looking to their own state before God, do not examine their conduct according to the spirit of the divine commandments, but consider whether they can persuade themselves that they have not broken any, or at least not many, of the commandments of God in their bare literal sense: and in this way it will be a comforting thing to a man to think that he has never committed murder, and it is a comfort which almost every one can enjoy: but what does it come to? and how much real value is there in the thought, unless a man can also add, I have never borne any malice or hatred in my heart? Who can

say *that?* or who can say, that he has never spoken angry words? or done angry deeds? or hated his brother when he should have loved him? Hence you perceive that our Lord's method of interpreting the law of God cuts entirely away the refuge, which we might find in the consideration of having kept the law in the letter, and sets us upon much deeper reflection concerning the meaning of the law, and the manner in which we have kept it.

Again, I would remark, that the method of dealing with the command Thou shalt not kill, which our Lord impresses upon His disciples, is not only the *best* mode but the *only* mode of dealing with it in teaching it to young persons, teaching it in fact to such persons as those for whom the Church Catechism is written. For what you have to do is this, namely, to guard a young person by proper teaching against those thoughts and habits, which are of the nature of murder, and which under favourable circumstances actually lead to murder. How is it that murder is ever committed? there may be a variety of causes immediately producing it, the desire of robbing another, or jealousy, or sudden anger, with many others; but the reason why the cause is able to take effect is this, that the person tempted allows anger and malice to take possession of him, to

spring up in his heart, to become the master of his conduct. So that a person who prays against carrying malice and hatred in his youth, is likely to be preserved in manhood from those crimes to which malice and hatred lead. And I think that when we endeavour to check our children in angry tempers and hasty language and violent conduct, we do not perceive the real malignity of the fault which we are correcting, unless we recognise it as belonging to the same root as that, from which murder sometimes springs.

Again, I would have you to observe, that the sin of which I am now speaking, is very various in its form and may arise from very different causes. Let me remind you of some of them. For instance, it may have the form of envy: our neighbour may be better off than ourselves, or he may have some quality which we have not; we may feel his superiority, and instead of acknowledging it and being spurred on by it to an attempt to improve ourselves or our condition, we may possibly be led secretly to dislike him; this is envy; it is the feeling which Cain had towards Abel, and which as you know in that case did issue in murder; his deeds were evil and his brother's righteous, and instead of improving himself, he hated his brother. And I believe that there is hardly any kind of hatred more common

than this; and one way in which it very commonly shews itself is the manner in which persons often speak slightingly of others, especially of good people, or at least people better than themselves; how common it is to hear bad motives attributed to persons, their actions misrepresented, their good qualities questioned,—and by whom? by those every way inferior to themselves, and who raise themselves in their own estimation by endeavouring to drag down their neighbour. Then, again, there is what we call revenge, or resentment; the fancy that we have been ill-used, and must not rest content under the ill-usage; and if any one should say that this is no breach of the law of Christ, which forbids us to be angry without cause, inasmuch as he who is injured *has* cause to be angry, I would say, that no injury can justify the feeling of revenge; it may be necessary to bring an offender to justice, and we may make excuse for anger if it is provoked, but it is contrary to the law of Christ, who commanded us to forgive our enemies, that we should cherish malice even against those who have provoked it.

But for one real injury there are a hundred fancied ones; and continually we find men bearing malice and hatred in their hearts, in consequence of some injury supposed to have been inflicted, some affront given, some slight put upon a person,

which have no existence whatever except in his own fancy.

I might give you twenty more instances, but what I have given will be sufficient. What I wish you to perceive is, that the sin, against which our Lord spoke in the text, is one of a very widespreading and varied kind; it may be of a very trifling strength in the eyes of man, or it may take its full-blown form in the shape of the murder of a brother, but in some form or another it meets us continually, and lies at our door ever ready to gain an entrance. Who can look into his heart and say that this is not so? or if not, will he not confess that it was so once, and that it is only by contending against the evil in the strength of God, that he has been able to subdue it? I know that in the case of this, as in that of many other sins, much depends upon natural temperament; some persons are from their birth quiet and easy in their tempers, not easily ruffled, not keenly sensible of slights and affronts, not prone at once to return railing for railing; and such persons may thank God for the character of mind which He has given them; but I apprehend there are very few, who cannot find some fault with themselves, if they examine their lives sufficiently closely. And this I would especially urge upon those who feel their infirmity, namely,

that however much we may be disposed to make allowance for a person of quick and excitable temperament if he speak a sharp and angry word, we can make little for him who "bears malice and hatred *in his heart*": those are the words of the Church Catechism, and they are very well chosen: a man may be excused for a hasty action or a hasty word, of which he is probably as much ashamed afterwards as any one can be on his account, but to bear hatred in the heart is no hasty action, it is a cool deliberate thing; and what will a man who hates another do, when the evening comes, and he has to make his evening prayers to God? will he pray with malice in his heart? he cannot do it; his prayer would be hypocrisy, a mere abomination: and so it is that our Lord warns us, that if we come with a gift to the altar and there remember that our brother has anything against us, we must first be reconciled to our brother and then come and offer our gift.

The force of all this moreover is very much enhanced, when we remember that our Lord in the text was speaking to His own disciples, that is, to men bound together by the one great tie of union with one another in Himself. He the head was speaking to the limbs of His body; He was addressing those who were made one in Him, and who were pledged therefore in the strongest

manner to love each other. Indeed, when we consider the matter thus, it seems almost unnecessary to give any command against bearing malice and hatred within the Church of Christ; the thing forbidden seems so entirely contrary to the first principles of the doctrine of the Gospel, that the whole duty might be taken for granted; and yet is it so? look at the rubric before the service for Holy Communion: what do we find there? a direction to the Curate, not to allow persons to come to the Communion betwixt whom he perceives malice and hatred; so that it would seem that there may be malice and hatred in the hearts of those, who are sufficiently impressed by a feeling of religion to wish to come to the Table of the Lord.

Yes! I believe it is so, much more than on general grounds could be believed: disciples of Christ, owning a common Lord, confessing common corruptions and sins, rejoicing in a common redemption, ought surely to love each other unfeignedly and make allowance for each other's infirmities, and hope all things and believe all things concerning each other; but so it is not in fact; even religion itself supplies causes of hatred and malice, and sometimes religious strifes and hatreds prove more virulent and more difficult to remove than any other whatever. Therefore let

no one say, that I have been speaking upon a subject which does not come home to us; but rather let us consider what a wide subject it is, how likely it is that we have more personal concern in it than we think, how thoroughly it becomes us as Christians to expel all malice and hatred from our hearts by the superior force of that love towards each other, which has been taught us by the love of Christ towards ourselves; and then let us pray God of His infinite mercy to grant us grace to prove by our lives, that there is no unchristian feeling lurking in our hearts.

## SERMON XXI.

TO KEEP MY HANDS FROM PICKING AND STEALING, AND MY TONGUE FROM EVIL SPEAKING, LYING, AND SLANDERING.

S. JOHN xii. 4, 5, 6.

Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

THIS passage contains (I believe) the only notice of the fact of Judas being a thief. By the expression "he had the bag," we are to understand that he carried the common stock of money belonging to our Lord and His disciples; and I should suppose that this charge was committed to him because he shewed more fitness than any of his fellows for managing worldly matters; it is not at all improbable that this should have been the

case; that very love of money, which seems to have belonged to him, may have been the reason why he proved to be what we should call *a good man of business;* buying and bargaining were probably much more to his taste than fasting and praying; and I would by no means blame him for making his natural powers and tastes useful in the position to which God had called him; if he had a turn for worldly business, he might very well make himself useful, as carrying the bag for a society, whose whole thoughts were turned in a very different direction.

But Judas was "a thief"; he did not carry the bag merely for others, he took money out of the bag for himself. S. John, in bringing the accusation against him, as in the text, no doubt had good evidence for what he said; he does not enter into the evidence, but as a companion of the Lord at the time when Judas had the bag, he simply states what was probably well known to the rest of the disciples: I should conceive that his thefts were not known at the time of commission, except of course to Him who knew what was in man; but many things would probably, after his great sin and apostasy, tend to render this part of his conduct clear. And indeed was it likely to be otherwise? was a man, who was capable of doing what Judas did in betraying Christ, likely

to be a person of very scrupulous honesty in the management of money, entrusted to him in perfect confidence, and probably with no account taken? I think the strange thing would rather have been, if we had received testimony from S. John that Judas had never committed any smaller sin against Christ and his fellows before he committed the great one,—had not broken the command "thou shalt not steal," to which he had every temptation, before he broke the command, "thou shalt do no murder," which he did virtually break when the convenient time came. Anyhow I feel sure, that S. John had good evidence for what he said, when he described Judas as a thief; and there must be some meaning in the fact of this character belonging to him.

Now it is very possible to find a close connexion between the covetousness which led Judas to rob the bag, and that which led him to accept thirty pieces of money as the price of innocent blood; but this is not exactly the manner in which I wish at this time to deal with the history. I desire rather to take the character and history of Judas in illustration of a sentence of the Church Catechism, which comes under our notice to-day, according to the course which I have been lately following. In enumerating our duties towards our neighbours, the Church Catechism teaches

the child to say amongst other things, that it is our duty "to keep the hands from picking and stealing, and the tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering"; and I wish you to observe the connexion which is here established between these two duties. Doubtless it is our duty not to steal, doubtless also it is our duty not to lie or slander, but you will perceive that these two duties are not laid down as separate duties, they are represented as being nearly connected; and I think that there really is a connexion, that it is instructive to observe it, and that the history of Judas illustrates it. For the great sin of Judas was a sin of the tongue: in one sense he was guilty of no evil speaking, for when he betrayed Christ he only said with apparent courtesy, "Hail Master"; in one sense he told no lie, for he said, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He," and so it was; in one sense he was guilty of no slander, for when he did speak of the character of Christ he said, "I have sinned, for I have betrayed the innocent blood"; but yet virtually and in fact, Judas was guilty of sins precisely of this character; for in denouncing His master to the Priests he did in reality side with them in their view of Christ, admitted Him to be a false teacher, denied His claims to be what He asserted that He was; and thus we

may say, that in those civil deceitful words, "Hail Master", was concentrated as much of evil-speaking lying and slandering, as ever two words contained.

Of course, if it had been merely accidental (so to speak) that Judas committed two different kinds of sin, one which we may call a sin of the hand, and the other a sin of the mouth, it would not be worth while to dwell on his case; but I believe you will find, that the union of these two kinds of sin in him is only an instance of a union which is very common, and very likely in the nature of things; these sins of the hand and sins of the mouth have the same root, are closely bound together; and when you meet with one, the other is generally not far off. And I notice this the rather, and lay the more stress upon it, because there is too great a tendency to separate the two; sins of the hand are liable to be looked upon as too distinct from sins of the mouth, and one to be regarded with a greater amount of horror, than belongs to it as compared with the other. And the reason of this is pretty clear; sins of the hand, that is, stealing and the like, are a breach of human law; they can be punished if detected, they have a very black mark put upon them because they *are* breaches of human law, and lead to prison and disgrace and

misery; but there are many sins of the mouth which cannot be so punished; some can, but many cannot; and so it comes to pass, that there are sins which really in the sight of God are quite equivalent to stealing, which yet seem to people in general as very small faults. Now of course, we as Christians should be ashamed to estimate our deeds merely by their worldly consequences; we should wish to see them as God sees them, to judge them as He judges them; and looking upon them thus we may easily perceive, that there is often no very real difference between a sin of the mouth and a sin of the hand, between an offense of which human law can take no cognisance and one which it punishes with severity, between the deceitful and slanderous behaviour of a man, who holds up his head as a decent member of society, and the open theft, which takes another man to gaol.

Indeed, looking upon the two classes of sin, sins of the hand and sins of the mouth, from a point much lower than that from which God sees them, it is not difficult to see that though one may be much more easily punishable than the other, yet it is not so certain that the one more easily punished is certainly much the more mischievous. For if my neighbour steals from me, I know the worst; he has taken so much money, or

has deprived me of this piece of property or that, and I can estimate exactly the loss sustained; but not so, if he speaks evil of me or slanders me; a man may do in this way far more mischief than by stealing; he may injure his neighbour's character and his neighbour's influence, which are of infinitely greater value than all human possessions; and who can estimate the amount of the injury? in fact we often use the expression, *stealing* a man's character, *robbing* him of his good name, in order to express (as it would seem) that slander and stealing are the same thing, and that robbery may be committed by the tongue as easily as by the hand. And it is obvious to remark, that in many cases an excuse may be made for sins of the hand, which cannot be made for sins of the mouth: a man steals, because he is hungry, or because he is poor and in need; but a man who speaks evil of his neighbour and slanders him, does so because there is some envy or malice lurking in his heart, or because he has a hunger for mischief, which can find no such excuse as can be made for him who hungers for daily bread.

Hence I am very glad to have the opportunity of pointing out to you the real nature of sins of the mouth, of which we do not always think as much as we ought, by exhibiting them in connexion

with their true companions and kinsfolk, sins of the hand,—evil-speaking, lying, and slandering in connexion with stealing,—of reminding you that the false witness is a robber, that Judas the traitor was also Judas the thief. For in truth, if I were speaking of the duties brought before us by the Commandments in order, and were to come to that which says "Thou shalt not steal," it might be fancied that this (like some others) hardly afforded any subject for advice or warning to a Christian congregation; and I know that it would be easy to waste the time of many of you in enlarging on such a subject, if taken only in its literal meaning; many persons might think it very unnecessary to tell a Christian congregation, that they ought not to steal; this sin of the hand seems too shameful and palpable to be capable of being committed by those who come to worship in the Church, and therefore I am glad to represent it in company with a sin which often is committed by those who come to Church, and which if properly dressed hardly passes for a sin at all; the thought of robbing our neighbour's shop may never enter our minds, but the sin of speaking evil of him and injuring his character may have been committed a hundred times.

Yet even with regard to the actual bare

sin of stealing, is it so clear that a Christian minister can safely take it for granted, that all who come to Church need no warning against temptations to such a sin? I think that any one, who considers the variety of motives which brings people to Church in these days, will hardly say so; if it could be assumed, that every one who comes to Church came with a broken and contrite heart to ask pardon for sins past and grace to live better for the time to come, we might perhaps say—the law of Christ is written in the hearts of these men and women, we need not press that old law which Moses wrote upon tables of stone: but we know that this is not the case; some persons come to Church because it is customary, and some to exhibit their Sunday clothes, and some to stare and look about them, some for mere amusement, some because they are compelled, and some I fear occasionally with still less godly purposes; and we must take things as we find them, we must acknowledge the fact, that our congregations are of this mixed kind, and act accordingly; we must endeavour to speak so plainly and practically concerning duty towards God and man, as by God's grace to touch the conscience if possible, and lead those, who come to this holy place without the fear of God in their hearts, to pray earnestly that they may be able to go and sin

no more. Hence it is very possible, that there may be present sometimes in a Christian congregation, met together for the avowed purpose of confessing sin, and asking God's grace for the time to come, and hearing His word, persons to whom it may be of advantage that we should press upon them the force of the command, "Thou shalt not steal." All that I would say about the command however is this, that the Church Catechism (if I understand its language rightly) takes the true course in teaching us to avoid the sin: it teaches the child to say, that it is its duty "to keep its hands from *picking and stealing*," by which two words I understand a distinction to be intended between small trifling thefts, and great heinous thefts; as we might speak in these days of *pilfering* and stealing; and I call your attention to this use of the two words, because I have no doubt that the right way to avoid stealing is to avoid it in its beginnings,—the child *pilfers*, and so the man *steals*,—the habit of taking what is not our own begins with matters so small as to appear trifling, and the habit grows so as to include things by no means trifling; in fact, I suppose that there is no habit, which grows more easily or rapidly; let a person only begin to pilfer, and unless he be in circumstances in which it is scarcely possible for him to break

through the bonds of society, he will most probably steal. I say this especially to young persons, and I would have them all to consider the importance of their small actions as leading to large actions, not to pass over this and that as trifling, but to remember that a small seed may produce a very great weed, and that if the weed be mischievous it may most easily be destroyed when it only exists as a seed. Oh, what an immense amount of wickedness and misery would be avoided, if young persons could be taught to think seriously of small sins!

You will understand then, why I think it necessary not to omit to speak in a Christian congregation of such a sin as stealing; but I know very well, that the class to whom such a subject is one of very near concernment is small, as compared with that for whom a consideration of the other kind of sin is necessary to their souls' health. "Evil speaking, lying, and slandering,"—how many things come more or less under that description, which are hardly regarded as sinful! Take for an instance the manner in which people misrepresent each other in matters of politics, how in speech and in print they make charges which are substantially or wholly false against those of another party, the manner in which evil motives are imputed and good deeds blackened;

I call your notice to an instance such as this, because it is one flagrant and patent; and I grieve to say, that religious feeling sometimes gives rise to as much "evil speaking, lying, and slandering" as political; in fact, both in politics and in religion many persons seem to think, that *party* covers every sin that can be committed. But you may say, these instances do not come home to us; well—perhaps not, but if I am not mistaken there is great danger, even to private persons in their ordinary intercourse with each other, of sinning in the same kind of way; I think that we do not practically give that credit for good intentions which we ought, that we are not so careful of our brethren's characters as we ought to be, that we do not sufficiently consider how far what we do and say will be to our brother's profit or loss. I know that it is very difficult to perform these duties and very easy to break through them; it is just because it *is* so easy to sin in this way, that we require so much circumspection, so much watching against the wiles of the devil; and because it is not easy to mention all the different ways in which the sin may be committed, I will rather call to your minds that description which S. Paul gives of a Christian grace, which if we have in our hearts, our mouths will not be likely to be guilty

of either "evil speaking, or lying, or slandering." That Christian grace is *charity:* you will remember how much and how warmly the Apostle speaks of it in his first Epistle to the Corinthians; and amongst other things he says this: "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,"—*that* is S. Paul's description of Christian charity, which he extols beyond faith and hope, and of which he declares that it will ever live, when other things which are more highly esteemed among men have vanished away; and you will easily see, that any one who has this charity or love to his neighbour in his heart can not very easily sin against him; "love is the fulfilling of the law," and he who loves his neighbour will not speak evil of him, will not slander him.

Here then is your remedy, Christian Brethren, against all breaches of duty towards your neighbour. It is in "following after charity," as S. Paul expresses himself; and especially I would beg you to observe, that the charity so spoken of is what I have just called emphatically *Christian*

charity, that is, love which we have one to another as members of each other *in Christ*, love of which He has set us the example by His own infinite love towards mankind, and to which the infinity of that love forbids us to assign any measure. "Evil speaking, lying, and slandering" would doubtless be unpardonable, even if we had only a common created nature such as the brutes have which perish, and if we were bound together by no more spiritual ties than those which bind them; but such modes of dealing with our neighbours become much more unpardonable,—much more unpardonable according to the verdict of our own consciences,—when we consider that we are all redeemed by the one sacrifice of Christ, all bound to love each other by the remembrance of His love towards us. And thus, Christian Brethren, a meditation upon the redeeming work of Christ will be the best security for brotherly love; a sense of His mercy to ourselves will surely make us merciful, and a belief that He has shewn mercy to our neighbour will teach us that we shall be most like Christ if we shew mercy likewise.

# SERMON XXII.

## TO KEEP MY BODY IN TEMPERANCE, SOBERNESS, AND CHASTITY.

1. Corinthians vi. 19, 20.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

I have remarked to you upon another occasion, that the Ten Commandments are to be understood chiefly as given to the Israelites in order to teach them what was necessary to ensure their national prosperity. The first Table taught them that the Lord God was a jealous God, who visited the sins of the people from one generation to another, one who would therefore avenge idolatry, one whose Name must not be taken in vain, one whose Sabbaths must be kept holy. And the second Table in like manner spoke of a blessing upon those who should honour father and mother; and

though there is only one command with promise, still I think that the spirit of that first command of the second Table may be conceived as extending to the rest; He, who would grant a long continuance in the promised land to those who honoured their fathers and mothers, would also look with favour upon those who did not kill, did not steal, did not commit adultery, did not bear false witness. In fact, the second Table cannot be better described, than as containing a man's "duty toward his neighbour;" it is his social duties, things which he is to do or not to do for the sake of his brethren, which form the primary subject of the last six commandments.

And you will remember, that it was the very principle of our Lord's teaching to give to the old commandments a new and wider interpretation. When in the sermon on the Mount He reviewed the sayings of them of old time, He did not contradict what had been said, did not abrogate the old law, but expanded it and made it more effective by going more deeply into the principles of the commands. This was the more necessary, because there is always a tendency to cramp and contract laws which seem to abridge our freedom, to say they only mean this or only mean that, instead of taking them in all the fulness of their spirit and trying to guide our lives

according to that, and finding perfect freedom in perfect obedience. None would be more ready to do this than the Jews of our Lord's time, and therefore we do not wonder at His taking an early opportunity of correcting the error: but apart from all consideration of times and circumstances, the key which our Lord gave to the interpretation of divine laws is always useful, and is a constant protest against all keeping of laws in the letter and breaking them in the spirit. What I wish to observe however is chiefly this, that when our Lord gives a higher and better view of the old law, He does not take away from it the character of social law (so to speak), does not make it involve, any less than it did before, the interests of our neighbours, but on the other hand does in fact make it far more effective even in this respect. Thus, for instance, the command not to be angry with our brother, and not to speak a harsh word to him, is a much more effective law than that of not committing murder, because a man who does not commit the smaller sin is sure not to commit the greater: and so in other cases. Hence it may be said, that the old law gave commands in which our neighbour's wellbeing was the first thing considered; the new law of Christ gives us commands, in which our personal holiness seems to be the first thing,

but in the keeping of which our neighbours are in fact interested quite as much as ourselves.

I make these remarks with reference to the fact that the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," seems to have been translated in the Church Catechism by the words "to keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity." For in doing so you will perceive that the spirit of our Lord's teaching has been followed; they of old time possessed a law, which the good order, nay the very existence, of society, requires to be kept, but which may be kept in the letter by one whose life is full of all uncleanness; so to keep it however would not be to keep it according to the mind of Christ; temperance, soberness, and chastity, these are the Christian virtues which are the fulfilment of the seventh commandment, and he who is sober, temperate, and chaste, will not sin against his neighbour by the breach of that law. All this we might have concluded upon general principles; any one who had studied the spirit of our Lord's teaching would feel little doubt as to the manner in which He would treat a command of this kind; but inasmuch as He has not left us in any doubt whatever, having directly treated of the case, I will read you His own words: they are very solemn words, and worthy of more consideration than they usually receive, and they

require no explanation or comment, and I will not venture to give any. "Ye have heard," said our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount, "that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Solemn words, I say, are those, worthy of much consideration, much more than they very frequently receive, but needing no comment, requiring simply to be looked upon in the light of an awakened conscience, understood best when a man feeling the weakness of his flesh reads them upon his knees in the presence of God, and asks God's grace to be able to act upon them. This one remark however I would make, that our Lord seems to lay the principal stress upon the spiritual danger which we ourselves incur by wanton behaviour; He says that if an eye lead us into sin, we had better even pluck it out, for that it is better that one member should perish than the whole body be cast into hell; very strong language,—I do not care to discuss how far it is to be taken literally, how far it is figurative,—

all that I care to lay stress upon is this, that our Lord has used such language as to make it clear even to the least thoughtful among us, that our salvation depends upon our contending earnestly against sins of the flesh, that those lusts against which we were pledged in our baptism to fight are enough to sink us into hell if they get the dominion over us; therefore that there is no sacrifice which it is not worth while to make, no discipline which it is not worth while to undergo, no self-denial which it is not our interest and our duty to practise, in order that we may be able to triumph over fleshly lusts which war against the soul. In this case then our Saviour seems to put the keeping of the commandment upon ground with which our neighbour has no concern, it would seem to be duty to ourselves—duty to our immortal souls—and not duty towards our neighbour, which Christ makes the argument for temperance, soberness, and chastity: and undoubtedly this is the highest and best ground; it is a ground which is much more likely to lead to purity than any consideration of our neighbour's interest; a man is not likely to be very careful of his conduct on his neighbour's account, unless he be first led by God's mercy to take a high view of his own condition before God; if he practically looks upon this life as a time in which as much

pleasure is to be swallowed as possible, and forgets the higher aims and purposes for which God made him, then it is not the consideration of duty towards his neighbour, which will hold him back from being a libertine; and if he have but a right sense of what he is, and a steady thought upon what he may be—how high in heaven or how deep in hell, according to the things done in the body,—then he will need no additional argument, depending upon the welfare of his brethren, to lead him to steadfast walking in the ways of purity and holiness. He, who is earnestly striving after Heaven himself, will not be likely to be a stumbling-block in his brother's way.

At the same time you cannot too carefully bear in mind, that the Church Catechism has done what is strictly correct and true, when it has classed amongst duties towards our neighbour those apparently personal duties of temperance, soberness, and chastity. They *are* duties towards our neighbours in the very strictest sense of the terms; in fact all personal virtues, all excellences of character, all good habits, all high and holy principles, are clearly matters in which our brethren have a very deep concern. Taking the matter merely with reference to our relationship to each other as fellow-citizens, only consider what an advantage it is to us that other men

should be honest, well conducted, conscientious, men of integrity and high principle. Consider in the case of a parliamentary election, for instance, what confidence we should have in the healthy condition of the country, if we felt certain that every man would vote according to his conscience, and would scorn a bribe; or consider with what ease and confidence all commercial transactions would be carried on, if we were well assured that there were no dishonest people in the world; or remember how that it is the predominance of good influence over bad, which alone makes a country tolerable, prevents it from going back into barbarism. So that we are all interested in the condition of our brethren; we are benefited by their goodness; we suffer by their sins. This is all clear enough; it is not the first time that I have pressed it upon you; but yet it is not so fully acknowledged as it should be, and we continually find that it is taken for granted that a man's sins are his own concern, and I think perhaps in nothing more, than in the neglect of those duties of which I am speaking in this sermon—temperance, soberness, and chastity; these are just those duties, the breach of which is looked upon the most leniently, as being those which are the most likely to be broken through in consequence of human frailty, and which are most peculiarly

a matter between a man and God. Now I do not mean to enter into the question of the comparison which the breach of these duties may bear with that of others; this is no business of mine; I am not the judge; but I *do* wish to lay stress upon the fact, that the breach of them is a matter in which our neighbour has a very direct concern; it is "my duty towards *my neighbour* to keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity"—those are the words of the Church Catechism, and they are very true words, they mean what they say, and they give a weight and importance to the duty which it might not otherwise appear to possess.

Let me divide the duty into two parts, and say a word upon each, as illustrative of the manner in which a breach of the duty affects our neighbour. And first of temperance and soberness, which we will take together as one duty. Now the difficulty of speaking upon such a duty as this is, that those who are most likely to be guilty of the breach of it are least likely to be here; nevertheless it may perhaps be not unprofitable to us, if only in the way of illustrating the manner in which sin spreads in its evil effects far beyond the persons who commit it, to notice how large a proportion of the ills of mankind (at all events in this country) are due to the breach

of this duty. Look at the want and misery that exist; much of it may perhaps be unavoidable, but I am quite certain that any one who makes the inquiry, will find that much more than half of it is due to a want of temperance and soberness: again and again I have found that this was the root of the misery of a whole family; and when the health and comfort of a man's family depend upon his sobriety, when it just makes *the* difference between comfort and misery whether a man is temperate or not, do you not see how completely sobriety is a duty towards his neighbour? not to himself only—it is that of course,—but to his neighbour as well? As I have said, I am not likely to be speaking to any one to whom these remarks will very directly apply, yet there are some more in danger from temptations to a sin of this kind than others, and if there be any one here who has been in the habit of speaking lightly or thinking lightly of the sin of intemperance, calling drunkenness by gentle names, disguising the real horrors of the sin and forgetting the awful amount of misery to which it leads, it may not be useless to lay stress upon the real character which belongs to it, and to declare that there can be no position in society occupied either by young people or old, in which temperance and soberness are not a duty to their neighbours quite as much as to themselves.

And what shall I say of the other duty? It is difficult to speak upon such a subject, and yet the solemn character of a messenger of Christ to His Church may enable me to say some plain words, for which one cannot often find a convenient opportunity. Alas! how little do those who live wanton lives consider how they sin against their neighbour! I say nothing of the general mischief done to the religious tone of the country by a prevalence of immoral habits; but for the moment, in considering the matter in the light of duty towards our neighbour, I would just observe how scandalously careless people generally are concerning the amount of misery produced by their want of chaste conversation; if there be any tragedy upon earth, any tale to make one's heart bleed, it is the history which one sometimes hears of poor ignorant women, reduced to an abyss of degradation and misery which no words can describe, by those who have forgotten that it is a duty towards their neighbour to hold their honour sacred—a neighbour whose permanent peace and happiness and self-respect ought to be our most earnest desire, for whom and for whose salvation the Lord Jesus Christ died.

But I will say no more upon this point; I know very well that there is only one argument,

which is likely to prove effective in persuading men to be very careful in the duties of temperance, soberness, and chastity; it may be very true that our neighbours have an interest in our purity of life, it may be very true that if we regarded our neighbours' interest we could not plot against their peace; but I am persuaded that the really strong argument to hold men and women in the ways of purity is that which is supplied by S. Paul in the text. He speaks to the Christians to whom he is writing, as to men who having been redeemed by Christ have been made the Temples of God—the Temples of the Holy Ghost: just listen to his words—you have often heard them, but they seem never to lose their force—"What! know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are God's." A very peculiar argument, and one which to a heathen would have had no meaning: the whole power of it depends upon the fact of those to whom it is addressed being Christians, and believing what Christ had done for them: S. Paul assumed that those to whom he wrote believed that they had been ruined by sin, that they had no good thing in themselves and much

that was bad, and that God of His own infinite mercy had lifted them out of this condition, that for their sakes He had become man, had taken their nature, redeemed it by taking it Himself, saved them from the curse of sin, given them the Holy Ghost: in fact he assumed that they believed the fallen race of man to have been so redeemed that it was possible to take a little child, and say of it without misgiving God has received this child, He loves it, He has bought it with a price and that price His own blood: and assuming all this you will perceive, that S. Paul had an unspeakable hold upon the hearts and consciences of Christians, he could press upon them the duties of temperance, soberness, and chastity upon grounds which a heathen could not even understand: it might be well for them on the ground of health and happiness—this a heathen could understand; it might be well on the ground of possibly escaping some future punishment—this too the heathen could understand, at least in some degree; it might be well, because philosophers—some of them at least—had asserted mere pleasure to be unworthy of human pursuit; but to a Christian the Apostle could say—"you *know* you are not your own: your members are not yours to defile: your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and no unclean thing may dwell there.

Do you believe this? I know that you believe it; then take heed and act accordingly."

Now is there any reason, Christian Brethren, why S. Paul's argument should not still be sound and good? or rather are not things now precisely as they were then? The Apostle, you will observe, introduces his appeal somewhat abruptly with a question—"What! know ye not?"—as though the thought of the defiling of the Temple of the Holy Ghost horrified his mind, and as though it were impossible for those to defile that Temple who remembered whose Temple it was. And it *is* horrifying to the mind: if there be any truth in the coming of Christ into the world, if the disease of mankind were so grievous as to require such a remedy, if the humiliation and death of the Eternal Son were the ransom of the world, then what shall we say of the guilt of polluting a body and soul which have been so redeemed? *Can* a man sin, who remembers to whom his body belongs? *can* a man pollute himself with sensuality, who repeats the words "my body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost"? Alas! Brethren, the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak; Satan has many devices, and it requires all our vigilance to resist him; but of this I am sure, that the ground taken by S. Paul in the text is that upon which you ought always to stand, when you

feel yourselves in danger: in such a case think upon what Christ has done for you in order that you may have grace to be pure; think of the ransom He has paid for you; think of the Holy Spirit whom He has sent down from Heaven upon you; and then say, "Nay I cannot sin! I am not my own. I am bought with a price, therefore I will be temperate, sober, and chaste; and so I will glorify God with my body and my spirit which are His!"

# SERMON XXIII.

NOT TO COVET NOR DESIRE OTHER MEN'S GOODS, BUT TO LEARN AND LABOUR TRULY TO GET MINE OWN LIVING, AND TO DO MY DUTY IN THAT STATE OF LIFE, UNTO WHICH IT SHALL PLEASE GOD TO CALL ME.

S. Luke, iii. 10—14.

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?
He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.
Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?
And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.
And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

The verses which I have now read contain the answers which S. John Baptist gave to several classes of persons who came to him for advice. And I think that I may say in general, before particularly discussing those answers, that they

were very different from what were expected by the persons making application. Indeed I should fancy that they are very far from being the answers, which we ourselves should have anticipated, if we looked to the notions which we have formed by reading the history of S. John's ministry.

We are all very familiar with this history: the figure of the man clothed in camel's hair, a leathern girdle about his loins, his meat locusts and wild honey, is one which we have known from our childhood; and we remember equally well the stirring character of his preaching, all the more stirring because so plain and simple, so immediately directed to the conscience, so evidently coming directly from the conscience of him who gave the message. "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. The axe is laid to the root of the tree: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." This was the burden of his message; the ascetic character of his life, his self-denial, his patient endurance of hardships would all help to give weight to it; and we know the result; the whole people came out to see and hear, many confessed their sins, many were baptized in the river Jordan in token of their sorrow for past sins and their desire to live pure lives in future; in fact there was a great spiritual movement, and multitudes of

every class came to the new prophet to know what they should do to be saved.

With such a teacher, and under such unusual circumstances, what should we expect that the answer would be when persons applied to S. John for advice? I think that we should feel disposed to guess at his answer by observing his own conduct; what had *he* done? he had left civilized society and gone into the wilderness, he had abstained from ordinary human food and supported himself upon locusts and wild honey, he had changed the common dress of his country for a girdle of leather and camel's hair; and if he had risen to any high degree of sanctity it was thus that he had risen; it was by turning his back upon all that was ordinary and according to the general routine of society, and becoming a monk, or hermit, or by whatever other name we choose to describe this ascetic kind of life. Then should we not expect that he would prescribe the like path of holiness to others? that he would say, you can have no hope or peace as long as you remain in the world, you must do as I have done, you must repent in the wilderness, the axe is laid to the root of the tree, the time is short? Certainly if any one ever was in a position to drive men by their fears to a life of this kind, S. John Baptist was that person: he had got the ear of the people as we say, and at the time they seemed

ready to do anything, to undertake anything, that he might be willing to prescribe; and I can have very little doubt but that when the people came to him saying, What shall we do? they expected that he would have told them of some great thing, which it would be for their spiritual safety to take in hand.

And if this were the case, they would be grievously disappointed; for observe what S. John did say, as we find it recorded in the text; there are three examples of application made to him, and we have the three answers which he gave. First came the people in general, and he gave them a general precept of charity: he that had two coats was to give to him that had none; and he that had meat was to do likewise. A very simple precept, you will observe; which each one of the people might go home and perform without stirring ten steps from his own door: no camel's hair and wild honey in the wilderness, but simple charity and brotherly love in the streets and lanes of Jerusalem. Next came the publicans and would fain know what they should do: surely these must renounce their trade, they must do penance by giving up their gains,—how could there be salvation for men, the very name of whose trade had become abominable? but no—it was an honest calling in itself, though one in which it was difficult to be honest, and therefore S. John does

not say, Leave your trade, but, Be honest in the discharge of it: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Again you will observe, no escape from sin for the publicans by going to the wilderness, but the true escape pointed out in the manful resistance of the temptations of the devil as they sat at the receipt of custom. Once more however there was the case of the soldiers: men of blood, much ruder in their warfare than now when the gentle spirit of Christ has to some extent softened even the horrors of war: what should these men do? could there be hope for them in following such a terrible trade? must not these at least go to the wilderness, and do penance with him? The answer is very striking: "do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages:" simple directions, but such as (if followed) would manifestly correct the leading faults in the soldier's character, and especially to be noted because, although nothing could be more contrary to the character of S. John's own life, even in this extreme case he did not counsel a change of profession, but taking it for granted that men were in the places in which God had put them, he counselled them in those places to do their duty to the best of their power. If in those positions they were desirous of doing the will of God, they could do it; and if they were not, then it would not be a retreat into

the wilderness or the adoption of rude clothing and coarse food, which would produce in them that change of heart, from which a desire to do God's will would proceed.

Here then are S. John's three answers, and you will perceive that the ground of them all is the same; they all go upon the principle of "doing our duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us"; but they are the more striking as coming from a person like S. John, a person so entirely out of the ordinary course, to whom any of the names, with which careless people delight to brand those who have been led to a more than usually solemn sense of their condition before God, might be most fitly applied; he might be called an enthusiast, one who held very strange notions, a man whose religion had turned his head, who would soon turn everything upside down if he could persuade many to be like him, and so forth; and yet you will perceive, that this strange preacher of repentance, who appeared to hold such extreme views about fasting and penance and the like, did, when applied to, give rules of holiness, which seem to err all on the other side; some persons would tell us that there is no religion in them at all, that they are only rules of morality, and that spiritual religion is something different from and beyond morality: well—be it so—but still these

*were* S. John's directions for preparing to meet Christ; S. John made these a part of religion and a very necessary part; and whereas he said not a word of giving up the world and going into the wilderness, he did lay great stress upon doing our duty simply humbly and in the fear of God, in that position, however unfavourable, in which our lot may have been cast.

And hence I have taken advantage of the history which the text contains, for the purpose of pressing upon you the peculiar force of that concluding article of duty towards our neighbour, which (according to the course of sermons in which we have been for some time past engaged) comes under our notice to-day. "It is my duty," our children are taught to say,—"it is my duty not to covet or desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour truly to get my own living and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me." This is an expansion of the tenth commandment, or a comment upon it; that command says, Thou shalt not covet, and the Church Catechism tells us what we are to do instead, how we are to guard against coveting or desiring what is not our own, namely by labouring to obtain honestly that which is our own; and no one can have any doubt that this tenth commandment is necessary, and that the interpretation of it in the Church Catechism is

also necessary, in every human society; there is no other way of guarding against theft and dishonesty; the belief that labour is the true means of living, and honest work the high calling of every man, is quite necessary to hold society together. But what I wish to do is rather to take that view of the matter, which immediately connects it with religion, and specially with the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ; a person may say, no doubt it is the duty of every one to live honestly, to get his own living, not to covet or desire what is his neighbour's; but there is nothing of Christianity in this, nothing of spiritual religion. Is there not? I think it is very shortsighted to say so; indeed this is just the point which I wish you to perceive, that these plain simple commonplace duties do belong to the essence of religion and may not be separated from it: I do not mean to say that they constitute the whole of religion, (and upon this I shall have a few words to say presently,) but they are now, as they were in S. John's days, the true root of Christian life. I say as they were in S. John's days, for you will remember that what he professed to do was to teach men how to prepare themselves for the coming of Christ; he said there is a mightier than I coming, one whose shoelatchets I am not worthy to unloose, one for whom I am sent to prepare the way, and you must be ready to meet Him, it will be ill

for you if He comes upon you unprepared. S. John then had this intention distinctly before him, that of preparing for the coming of Christ; and how did he prepare? by telling men to do their duty in the state to which they were called, to act up to the light given them, to be honest, quiet, content. He did not say that this was the whole of the religion which He who came after him would have to teach; on the other hand he used some mysterious language about a "baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire," which should contrast strongly with his own baptism which was merely a baptism with water unto repentance. And indeed S. John, having himself adopted a course of life so different from that of the ordinary routine of human life, would clearly be the last man to say, that religion consisted in nothing but an earning of an honest livelihood; he who had been himself led by the Spirit into the wilderness from his childhood, in order that he might be a preacher of repentance of more than ordinary power, would be the last man to be surprised if he should find other men led by the same spirit to courses of conduct, which might seem to the world at large strange and enthusiastic: though even in this case, I may remark by the way, that S. John might fairly say, that he was himself following the precepts which he gave to others; he might say that he had been

placed in the wilderness by God, that *that* was his place, that a life of austerity and self-denial was his calling, and that in that calling he was simply doing his duty. But however this may be, the point upon which I am dwelling is clear, namely, that although S. John knew better than most men the truth, that Christ was coming as a revealer of mysteries, and a founder of a more spiritual religion, and a medium of much nearer communion with God than any which yet had been vouchsafed to man, he still laid the foundation in the performance of common duties, he still preached this as the best preparation for the coming of Christ, that men should each in their own calling do their duty as in the fear of God.

And, Christian Brethren, I do not know that there is any one single truth, which it is more useful to impress upon your minds, than this, which S. John Baptist preached in his days to those, who came to know what they ought to do in order that they might be prepared for the coming of Christ. He did not speak of that coming merely as an advent of peace to mankind, merely a declaration of pardon, merely a revelation of a Redeemer; he took rather the severer view of the kingdom of Heaven, which a preacher of repentance clad in camel's hair and living in the wilderness was likely to take, and he spoke of one whose fan was in His hand, who would purge

the floor and gather the wheat into His garner, but burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable; and yet, in the prospect of this awful advent, he could find no better teaching for publicans and soldiers and common people of all sorts, than to do their duty in the station to which God had called them. And therefore have I not a good example to quote, if in the prospect of another advent of the same Christ I still adopt S. John's line of teaching? Our business, Christian Brethren,—I mean that of the ministers of Christ,—is emphatically this, to prepare for His coming, to make ready a people for the Lord; all the language which S. John used about the fan which should purge the floor, and the gathering of the wheat and the burning up of the chaff, we can adopt in a stronger and more awful sense than belonged to them in connexion with the first advent of Christ; and we like him have to preach repentance, and to call men not to talk about repentance merely but to bring forth fruits worthy of the same; then I say that I may safely take the example of S. John in that kind of teaching which the text contains; I may say, do your duty where God has placed you, be honest, be diligent, be kind, be pitiful, not slothful in business but yet in all things fearing the Lord; and though this may not be all, yet at least it is the great beginning of all good things, and is the true foundation of the house

not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Oh, whatever you do, Christian Brethren, never allow Satan to tempt you to divorce the mysteries of a religious life and the high privileges of walking with God from the common duties of common life! if anything can tend to bring disgrace upon the Name of Christ and the character of His Church, it is the fact of men laying claim to preeminence amongst His disciples, and yet being palpably deficient in those virtues, on the exercise of which the wellbeing of society depends; Christ never abrogated the laws which command men to live soberly, righteously, and godly; what He did do was this, to give higher sanctions to those commands, and greater encouragements to keep them, and more awful views of the danger of breaking them; and unless the Christian life begin with the keeping of these, it will never be such as we shall wish our lives to have been when Christ comes to purge His floor.

While however I press upon you, as I would ever desire to do, this practical view of Christian duty, I would wish also to lay stress upon that other view of the matter, to which I have before alluded, namely, that there is a high region of mystery and spiritual things in the kingdom of Christ, which he may rightly and safely enjoy, who has learned that they are not to be separated from works of practical piety. And I would

illustrate this by observing, that though the Church Catechism, which commences with the baptism into Christ and the privileges belonging to it, gives full room in its centre to the discussion and inculcation of duty towards God and towards our neighbour, it does not stop there, but goes on in its conclusion to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It ends therefore with the great Christian mystery; it leads up to the view, vouchsafed to us while in this world, of that great sacrifice for sins, in virtue of which we are able to serve God acceptably and to offer up our poor services as a sacrifice to Him. It would clearly take me beyond my present purpose to enter fully into this department of Christian privilege and duty; I only desire, by this reference to the structure of the Church Catechism, to point out to you, that the most urgent enforcement of practical duty is quite consistent with, nay is the proper preparation for, the inculcation of that portion of religion, which is the most removed from common life, and which carries us up highest into the region of mystery. If I might illustrate the same thing by reference to the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, I would say, that He came into this world to walk with men and suffer with them in common things, and then He returned to His Father that we might have grace from above to walk according to His pattern. And, Christian Brethren, if I

may venture for once to speak of the general character and aim of the doctrine which is preached in this Church, I would say this, that I would not wish any one, who has habitually attended this church, to be able to say of me,—he belongs to this school or he belongs to that, or he preaches this doctrine or that; but rather this—he endeavoured to teach us how thoroughly the religion of Christ was bound up with our everyday life and actions; how the Spirit of Christ has come into the world and sanctified common things; how that to preach the Gospel it is not necessary to forget duty towards God and towards our neighbour, but rather that these are the true foundation-stones of a really spiritual life.

Lastly, in bringing to a close this long course of sermons, let me say, that it is very significant to observe the connexion of the beginning with the end. We began with faith in God, we conclude with doing our duty in the state of life to which it pleases God to call us. Yes, "my duty towards God is to believe in Him;" this is the root of all; to believe in Him as He revealed Himself to us specially in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as He still reveals Himself to faithful and pure hearts by the inner working of that Holy Spirit, who sanctifies all the elect people of God,—to believe in Him thus is the

root of all holy living in this world, and of all hope in the world to come. Indeed without such faith in God it would be nonsense to speak of doing our duty in our stations because *God* has called us to them; it is this faith in God, this belief that He has put us where we are and will bless us in our posts, that is the true encouragement to all of us, whether rich or poor, whether high in the ranks of this present world or lowly and slightly esteemed, to do our best to adorn our profession and work the work of God. May He, Christian Brethren, in whom you profess to believe, so strengthen and deepen your faith, that you may do your duty in the stations to which He has called you in this world, and may not be ashamed when the day of judgment comes!

THE END.

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GOODWIN
MY DUTY TOWARDS GOD, AND MY DUTY TOWARDS MY NEIGHBOUR

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